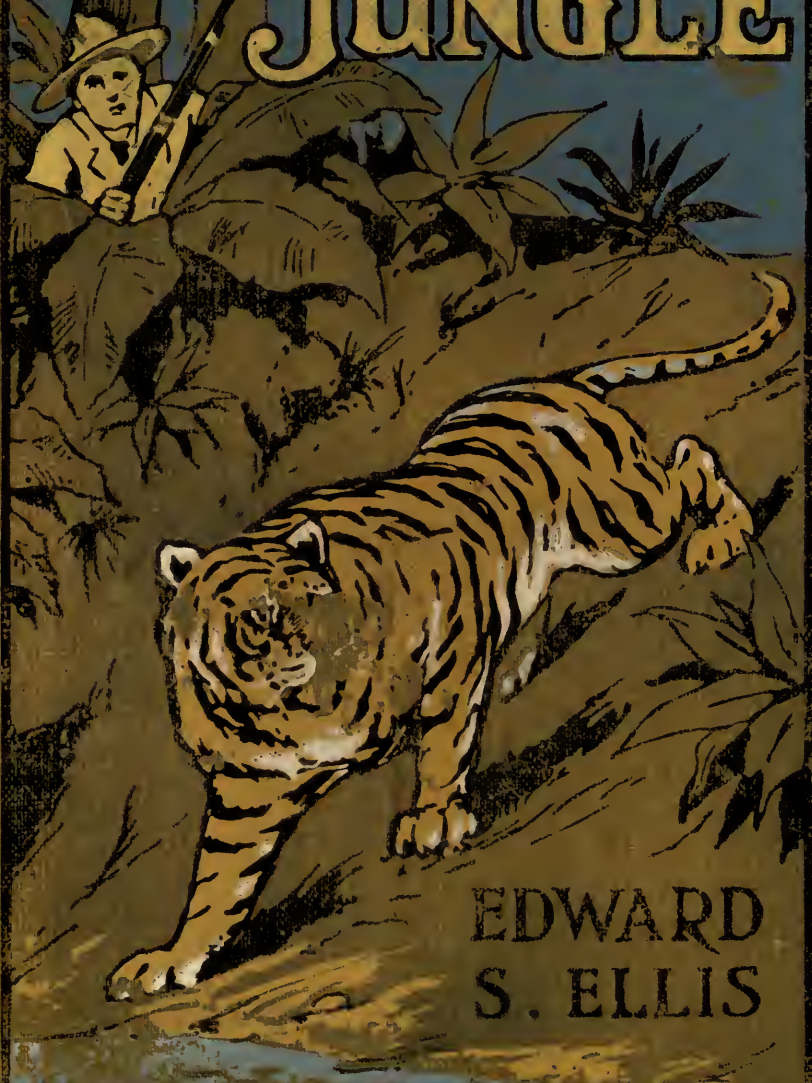


RIVER AND JUNGLE



EDWARD
S. ELLIS

From Mother
To Horace
with best
Love

RIVER AND JUNGLE

WORKS BY EDWARD S. ELLIS

With Illustrations, cloth gilt

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Lost in the Rockies. | Wolf Ear the Indian. |
| A Princess of the Woods. | Astray in the Forest. |
| Captured by Indians. | Bear Cavern. |
| The Daughter of the Chieftain. | River and Forest. |
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| Deerfoot in the Forest. | Camp Fire and Wigwam. |
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| The Mountain Star. | Scouts and Comrades. |
| | Shod with Silence. |
| | The Forest Messengers. |
| | A Hunt on Snow-shoes. |

PUBLISHED BY

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED
London, New York, Toronto & Melbourne



Dudley sprawled forward on his face.

see page 71

RIVER AND JUNGLE

BY

EDWARD S. ELLIS

Author of "Hunt of the White Elephant," "Lost in the Forbidden Land,"
"Fire, Snow and Water," etc. etc.

WITH FOUR FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
EDWIN J. PRITTIE

SIXTH THOUSAND

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RIVER AND JUNGLE

CHAPTER I

TRAVELLER AND GUIDE

IT IS something more than a generation ago that George Mayson, an American missionary, entered upon his self-sacrificing labours in Siam, settling about fifty miles to the eastward of the royal city of Ayuthia, which was conquered by the king of Pegu in the sixteenth century.

When Mr. Mayson left his native country, he took with him his wife and little daughter, Fannie, but his son Dudley, who was about ten years old, remained in order that he might receive the educational training which could not be obtained in the distant region on the other side of the world. Dudley made his home with his uncle, a brother of his father. He was a sturdy, vigorous lad, fond of sports and of his studies, in which he did so well that his uncle wrote his parents, when the boy had reached the

age of sixteen, that he was prepared to enter college. Such, however, was not the purpose of his father, who gave the permission for which his son had been impatiently waiting to join his parents and sister in Farther India.

Dudley received the consent as a boy hails the granting of a long-coveted vacation. It was natural that he should long to visit strange, romantic countries, for what youth does not feel such a yearning? The letters from his parents and finally from Fannie, when she became old enough to write, kept alive the flame that had been kindled when he tearfully bade them good bye on the pier in New York. Knowing for years that he was to go to the other side of the globe, it was natural that he should acquaint himself as fully as possible with the country and its people. Had you been a passenger on the steamer which took Dudley from New York to England, whence he sailed by another steamer to Calcutta and thence to Bangkok, and had you entered into conversation with the youth, he would have told you many interesting facts about Burmah, known also as the Kingdom of Ava, and of Siam the principal state of Indo-China. He knew more than many men who had lived in Burmah for years about its physical features, its climate, its minerals, its

vegetable productions, the animals, and even about its people and their religion, which you need not be told is Buddhism.

Dudley knew a good deal too about the mythical history of Burmah. He could have told you of the long strife between the kingdoms of Ava and Pegu for mastery. Pegu reached its zenith about 1580, but about two hundred years later, the Peguans were conquered by Alompra, the greatest warrior-king in Burmese history, and the present dynasty was founded. Then followed collisions with the British, who in 1852, reduced Burmah to its present limits. British Burmah, including the three maritime provinces beyond the Ganges, was united under one local administration in 1862, the whole territory having been taken from the king of Burmah in the two wars for which he gave cause. That of 1885 finally resulted in the absorption of Burmah by the British Empire.

Of Siam's history Dudley would have told you that the annals begin over two thousand years ago, though nothing authentic is known until 1350 when Ayuthia, the former capital, was founded. Cambodia was first conquered in 1532, and in the last century the Siamese dominion was extended to Singapore. The present dynasty ascended the throne in 1782, but the

Protestant and Catholic missionaries, who began their labours in 1828, have met with only slight success.

However, I do not intend to impose upon you one-half of all the youth learned, the telling of which would occupy many pages, for my object is to give the story of Dudley Mayson's experiences in Farther India, and they will take all the space I have at command.

In high spirits, after his long voyage, Dudley landed at the picturesque city of Bangkok, the "Venice of the East," with its numberless canals, quaint, bell-shaped pagodas, and its myriad idols erected to the honour of Buddha. The uncle of the lad had presented him with an excellent rifle, which you may be sure the boy guarded with jealous care. It was not the modern breechloader and repeater, but an excellent weapon, with which your fathers were more familiar than you.

Dudley's heart was beating high with hope, when he scanned the crowd on the wharf for sight of his father and mother, whom he was sure he would recognize, though he was not so certain about Fannie, who had grown from an infant to quite a big girl. But though the lad studied the many faces that were turned curiously toward the passengers, to his great dis-

appointment, he saw not one of his relatives. He walked slowly down the plank, gazing right and left, and wondering what it all meant, when he observed a slim, athletic native, of swarthy complexion, bare-legged, wearing a turban, and with black eyes of serpent-like keenness, who was scrutinizing him with evident interest.

When the youth paused on the wharf, debating what he ought to do next, and how he was to get the explanation of that which mystified him, the native who had been scanning him closely came forward, touched his forefinger to his forehead, and with excellent accent, asked:

“Are you Master Dudley Mayson?”

“I am,” replied the astonished youth; “who are you?”

“I have a letter from your good father for you,” said the native, bowing and drawing a missive from under the thin calico-like jacket which enclosed the upper part of his body. The youth recognized the familiar writing in pencil of his parent, and, with an interest which may be imagined, read:

“My Dear Dud: We are as disappointed as you in not meeting you in Bangkok. Two of my native converts, in whom your mother and I are deeply interested, lie at death’s door with fever, and we feel, in the critical situation, that it is not well to leave them alone. So I send the bearer to

take charge of you. He is Nughwa, a convert, unusually intelligent and faithful, who will be the best of servants to you, and give you better care than I could give. He will bring you by steamer to Ayuthia, from which point you will have about fifty miles to travel through the jungle on foot. The experience will be a fitting introduction to Farther India. You can send your luggage forward by two native bearers that Nughwa will engage at Ayuthia. Do not pay these men in advance, but leave the settlement to me. They will be more prompt and faithful, if they know the reward is awaiting them at the end of their journey than they would be if the money were given them before they had earned it.

“I need not tell you how anxiously we are awaiting your coming. Mother, Fannie and I can hardly restrain the delight we feel at the prospect of soon clasping you in our arms. God be with you, as He has been with us all in the past, thanks for His manifold mercies.

“Your Affectionate Father.”

Dudley was thrilled with happiness by the perusal of this note, though he could not restrain a touch of regret that the meeting with his loved ones was thus deferred for several days. But the prospect of a tramp through the wonderful Siamese forest, in company with one who had known it all his life, appealed to the youth, who impatiently awaited the hour for starting. Nughwa shouldered the lad's trunk, and they tramped the short distance to an adjoining wharf, where passage was engaged to

Ayuthia. The steamer soon sailed, and the slight voyage was made without mishap or adventure. At the ancient capital two natives eagerly snatched the chance to carry the trunk through the jungle to the missionary station, more than content to receive their pay on the conclusion of their work. They had heard of the "good man true," as they referred to the clergyman, and, slight as was the compensation, it was a windfall to the grinning natives, who chattering, and laughing in a jolly mood, set off almost at a run, taking turns in carrying the small trunk, which seemed to be no more than a feather's weight to the active, sinewy fellows.

At Ayuthia, Nughwa and Dudley Mayson turned eastward and entered the Siamese forest. In that land of vegetable and animal exuberance, nothing was to be feared in the way of a famine. In tropical countries, one cares little for animal nourishment, the food being almost exclusively fruit, which, as you know is more cooling than flesh, which forms the staple article of diet in the frozen regions.

Rice and sugar are the principal crops of Siam, and the chief fruits are the mango, the guava, the mangosteen, the banana, and the durian, which ranks as the king of fruits. The last named in one respect resembles our tomato,

in that nearly every person feels at first a dislike for it. Many refuse to touch it in any circumstances. When Dudley Mayson, in response to the repeated urgings of his companion, forced himself to bite into the fruit, he actually held his nose, to shut out all perception of its flavour. Once his thumb and forefinger slipped and he howled with disgust, ere he could clasp his nose again.

Nughwa shook with laughter, but not until he had assured Dudley that his parents and sister were extremely fond of the fruit would he repeat the attempt. It speedily grew more tolerable, and by and by he became fond of it. The native had brought a fine rifle and a good supply of ammunition, so that both were well prepared for the experience that was certain to come to them before reaching the missionary station.

Throughout the first day, Nughwa led his friend over a well marked trail which in the main followed the right direction. At night, it approached a small, sluggish stream on the banks of which they started a fire. The noise of prowling animals, some of which approached quite close to camp, kept the youth in so nervous a state that, despite his fatigue, he did not fall asleep until near midnight. The sight of a pair

of glowing eyes, the shadowy outline of a wild beast, whose character he could not guess, except to know that it was the blaze alone that restrained it from leaping upon him, was not calculated to soothe the nerves of a visitor in the jungle. But Dudley was tired out from the tramp, which was all the harder from his long rest on shipboard, and at last he dropped into slumber which did not end until the hot, tropical sun was shining through the heavy foliage overhead.

With the coming of daylight, the denizens of the jungle slunk from sight, and Nughwa seized the occasion to gather some bananas and mangoes, upon which the two made their morning meal. The tramp over the trail was a continual wonder to Dudley Mayson, who paused more than once to admire the towering trunks, the winding endless vines, the brilliant tropical flowers and vegetation, and the glimpses of birds of gorgeous plumage, flitting among the branches overhead, with now and then a sight of some wild animal, or writhing serpent, which flashed across their path or hissed at them when they passed too near. Many of these were of the most venomous species, and kept the youth in a constant state of apprehension.

In walking forward, an interval of ten or

twelve feet was between the two friends. Dudley was sauntering in this aimless fashion, when his guide suddenly stopped. The lad did the same, but could not divine the cause for such an abrupt halt on the part of his friend.

“Stand where you are,” said Nughwa in an even voice, “and you will not be harmed.”

“I don’t see why I should be harmed, if I keep on,” replied the youth, who, nevertheless, remained motionless.

The native said nothing, but turning about, began walking toward his friend on tiptoe, as if trying to avoid all noise. He had come half the distance, when he again paused, reached the muzzle of his gun into the dense shrubbery at the side of the path, and struck a sharp blow at something which he alone saw. Pausing only an instant, he struck a second time. Dudley had heard a twisting and turning among the leaves, but it ceased.

“It is dead,” calmly remarked Nughwa, “you need have no fear, my friend.”

“The only way to free me from fear is to kill *all* such pests,” growled Dudley, as he resumed his walk, wondering by what means his guide had learned of the danger that impended, after he had passed it and it was closer to Dudley himself than to the other.

CHAPTER II

A TROPICAL ZEPHYR

THE observant Nughwa noticed that the continuous tramping was trying to his companion. Dudley would speedily regain his normal athletic condition, but he needed time in which to do it. The guide, therefore, indulged him, but managed it so delicately that the youth never suspected the fact.

During their long rests, Dudley talked much of his father, mother and sister. He never tired of hearing about the loved ones, and Nughwa showed his love for the good people whenever reference was made to them. The son was glad in his heart that he had come to spend the years with those who seemed to grow dearer to him with every mile's decrease of the distance separating them.

The second noonday halt was made a little earlier than usual, the reason on the part of the guide being that to which I have referred.

“While you wait here, I will make search

for something that will serve for our dinner," remarked Nughwa, as his young friend sought an inviting seat on the ground.

"Very well; do as you please, for I don't see the need of any hurry on our part, though the nearer I get home, the more anxious I am to push on."

Nughwa sauntered off, disappearing almost immediately among the luxuriant foliage that walled them in on every hand. Dudley was growing accustomed to the perils of a tropical jungle, and did not hesitate to lean back against the trunk of a massive rubber tree, that seemed to tower more than a hundred feet above him. Although he had slept well for most of the preceding night, he was beginning to feel drowsy, when he became conscious of a strange sound that was creeping through the forest. He sat up alert and suspicious.

"I have had glimpses of strange countries since leaving America," he thought, "but Siam beats them all; a fellow doesn't know what to expect next; what can this mean?"

The sound, of which he had become so suddenly aware, resembled a low, mournful moaning which rapidly grew in volume and then died away as abruptly as it had begun.

"Maybe it's some kind of wild animal that

I haven't met yet; if it's coming down my way there's nothing like being ready."

Reaching out, he picked up his rifle which he had leaned against the tree, and, rising to his feet, stood listening and peering into the forest depths around him.

Dudley Mayson was not left long in doubt. Looking aloft he saw the broad leaves agitated and swaying, while through the fluttering openings, he observed an ominous darkening of the sky.

"It's a hurricane, or tornado or cyclone, or whatever they call it in this part of the world and I don't know whether to stay where I am or run for shelter."

But whither should he flee? In the western part of North America, the settlers, when they see signs of the coming of the cyclone, take to their cellars and remain till the terror has gone by. But there was no subterranean retreat in which Dudley could find refuge, and the worst course would be to climb one of the trees around him. To dash to the right or left, or to the rear or front, might carry him into the claws of the demon of the sky. To stay where he was might do the same, but since there was no choice, he held his ground.

The moaning abruptly rose to a roar, and

in the air overhead were eddying leaves, whirling twigs and branches of considerable size. The lurid gloom assumed a peculiar, greenish hue, whose frightful appearance was intensified by quivering streaks of lightning, which cut back and forth through the gloom, like crimson swords, in invisible hands. For a time, this electrical display was unaccompanied by the slightest noise.

Awed and scared, Dudley was viewing the impressive scene, when, all at once, the whole greenish-black space, reaching from the horizon to the zenith, flashed into a vivid, blinding sheet of flame, succeeded instantly by Egyptian darkness. Then came a crash, as if earth and sky had met in collision, and the former had been shattered. The flame and shock marked the discharge of the aërial into the terrestrial battery,—the effort of that fearful and so little known power to regain its equilibrium. There was one horrible throb of the tortured atmosphere, which caused Dudley Mayson to gasp, and involuntarily leap from the ground.

But he had seen terrific storms in his own country, and he kept command of his senses. He knew the roaring was increasing fast. 'Amid the tumult, suddenly sounded a pattering as if hailstones were rattling on the roof of a

house, but it was caused by raindrops of unusual size. They shot downward through the foliage like rifle bullets, and, seen at intervals against the background of fiery sky, recalled the old figure of the spears of a mighty advancing army.

Noting the increase of fury, Dudley started to place the trunk of the tree between him and the tornado, but he could not reach the protection. He was forced back and, turning about, leaned to the rear, but was pushed forward as if by one of his own age, who had his hands against his back, and was shoving with might and main.

The fact that he was helpless in the grasp of the tornado frightened Dudley, who clutched a bush with one hand, only to find his fingers immediately snatched free again.

“I wonder where I’m going to fetch up,” he thought with a thrill of dread; “we passed a stream of water only a little way back, and I don’t want to be pitched into that, but I believe I’m diving in that direction!”

Under the impulse of his great fear, he did the only thing that promised to save him for the time being: he threw himself flat on the ground, dropping his gun and flinging both

arms around the base of a sapling, to which he clung with desperate strength.

As he lay thus, a vast relief came to him with the knowledge that the volley from the artillery of the air was far enough above the surface of the earth to miss him altogether. The small tree to which he clung swayed to and fro, but the strain on the roots was slight, and even when the young American ventured with some timidity to sit up, he was not driven from his position.

“I’m going to need all the arms I own before I get through with this business,” he thought, as he slipped the strap of his rifle over his head, so as to hold the weapon against his back, with his hands free. Had not his hat been tied fast, it would have been whisked away with the first breath of the gale.

The tornado was raging with indescribable violence, and, as is not infrequently the case, it assumed a certain rotary movement. The darkness became almost like night, owing partly to the limbs, leaves, twigs, branches and in more than one case, trees that were spinning through the air. Fearful of being lifted bodily from the earth, Dudley once more dropped on his face and clasped his hands behind the sapling.

A peculiar shivering of the base caused him



Helpless in the grasp of the tornado.

to look up. Three feet above the ground the tree, fully five inches in diameter, suddenly parted, the action being the more striking, because in the deafening roar and tumult, no sound of the disruption was heard. In one instant the sapling's trunk was solid and the next second only a stump remained with a hundred needle-like splinters pointing skyward. The rest of the tree that had been wrenched off, plunged away and joined the dismembered forest monarchs that were holding their carnival.

Dudley should have hugged the ground tighter than ever, but the pandemonium bewildered him, and while he did not rise to his feet, he again sat up. It was at that precise moment that the vortex of the cyclone caught him and away he went as the sapling with its splintered prongs had gone to join the wild dance. Realizing his mistake, he tried desperately to throw himself on the ground but could not do so. Think of the situation of a boy, caught in such a gust of wind that he cannot fall down! He was swept onward amid the swirling branches and trees, as if he were but a twig himself. That he was not killed seemed a miracle, but it is probable his danger was lessened by the fact that he was carried with the

torrent which swept everything before it. Once, he caught a glimpse of another body, made a football like himself, but the sight was so brief, he could not tell whether the unfortunate was man or animal.

It is unlikely that this wild flight of Dudley Mayson lasted more than a very few minutes, for had it been longer, assuredly he must have been hurled to death, as may be said, in the twinkling of an eye. He ran, tumbled, scrambled to his feet, vainly resisted, and kept on going until suddenly he was roused by the consciousness that he was in the water. Still fighting for life, like a senseless animal, from blind instinct rather than reason, he was enveloped in spray and mist, sometimes under the surface and sometimes above, and in momentary peril of being strangled. Without seeking to do so, he grasped the limb of a tree that was larger than any to which he had hitherto clung for support. Even with this aid, it was impossible he should have escaped had not the tornado subsided as suddenly as it had burst forth in irrestrainable fury.

Within the same minute that he seized the new support, he saw he was outside the zone of danger. A few fitful flashes of lightning quivered in the air and then ceased. The pall-

like curtain that had darkened the sky was drawn aside and the tropical sun came forth again in all its flaming splendour. The terror of darkness fled at the approach of beauteous day.

The tornado, which as has been shown, resembled the terrific cyclones known to America, cut a swath of no more than a hundred yards in width, as it charged with arrowy swiftness through the jungle, but the track which it left was like that made by an army with axes. Dudley heard the moaning roar, resembling the distant ocean, as the tornado careered on its way, and the sound rapidly died out in the distance.

Conscious that this peculiar danger had gone by, the young American gave his attention to the new situation in which he had been tossed. He was so surrounded by branches and trees, that he appeared to be in a floating forest, which was still fretted and tossed as if with the memory of the prodigious wrenching it had received.

“I wonder whether Nughwa got any of this,” was his thought; “if he did, I don’t believe he ever had a worse shaking up; perhaps these hurly-burlies are regular things in this part of the world, but father never wrote anything about them, and I shall hope they are not com-

mon. I guess the best thing for me to do is to go ashore."

Groping with his hand, he was vastly relieved to find his rifle had not been injured by its rough usage, but the barrel was so filled with water that the weapon would be useless until the charge was withdrawn and a new one rammed home.

The task of making his way to land, however, proved harder than he had supposed. The current was so obstructed by the mass of trees and limbs that it was hardly possible to force his way through it. Using a trunk as a raft, he paddled with one hand, but at the end of fifteen minutes, could not see that he had made any progress whatever. The stream was a hundred yards wide, and, somehow or other, he had been forced into the middle of it, so there was little or no choice between the two shores.

"I don't see any chance of getting ahead," he mused, resting from his labour, "and I'll try whether I can do better in the other direction."

He faced about and, with one arm over the tree, swung the other hand as a paddle, not forgetting to call his legs into play. He kept this up until tired, and then scrutinized the land in front and rear.

“I believe I have gained about an inch; at this rate I shall make shore in the course of two or three months. Where the mischief can Nughwa be?”

In the hope that his guide was within hail, Dudley shouted his name several times, but without bringing any response.

“I hope no harm has come to him, though a falling limb will kill a Siamese as quickly as an American, if it hits him right. Helloa!”

The picture upon which the eyes of Dudley Mayson rested at that moment was a startling one. Not fifty feet away the head of a wild boar suddenly bulged up from the water among the floating trees, his fore feet resting on a large trunk, while he looked across at the young man who was drifting down stream in his company. The animal was of enormous size. With the ears pricked up, his jaws partly open, as if he were panting, and his huge snout projecting over the support, with the immense tusks curving upward, he was a formidable animal that would give the path to no denizen of the jungle. The wild boar fears no creature that lives.

CHAPTER III

A HURRIED FLIGHT OVER A ROOF

DUDLEY MAYSON had little knowledge of the wild boar. Had he been better informed, he would have felt more alarm at sight of one of the ferocious quadrupeds so near him, for, as I have said, the boar will not turn aside through fear of anything. The royal Bengal tiger has been known to circle round him.

The genus *sus* is not noted for its intelligence, and it is quite likely that when this specimen caught sight of an American youth, his emotion was that of curiosity mingled perhaps with a certain fear. He surely had seen nothing of the kind before, and he did not know what to make of the intruder into his country. It is the uncertainty regarding the nature of a danger that often throws the most intrepid beast into a panic. In the present instance, the boar, after staring at the boy for several minutes, suddenly uttered a grunt and slid back into the

water. He proved his immense strength by ploughing through the débris, almost without hindrance, never pausing until his feet touched bottom, and he walked out on the land. There he halted, and once more turned and fixed his gaze upon that mysterious object out in the current.

By this time, Dudley understood the mystification of the creature, whose size as he stood like a statue staring at him, he admired. The youth suddenly raised himself so that his head and shoulders were lifted a foot higher than ordinary. Then he emitted the most horrible howl which he could formulate.

That cry marked the finish. The boar gave a single, whiffling grunt, seemed to whirl squarely about with a single leap from the ground, and flirting his short tail, twisted into a funny loop, he dived into the jungle and vanished. Doubtless he kept up his flight long after he had passed from sight.

“I wish all the wild beasts in this part of the world would be as scared as you at sight of me; it would save me a lot of ammunition.”

Once more Dudley called the name of his guide, repeating it several times, but with no more result than before.

“It looks to me as if I’ve got to run this

business myself," was the conclusion of our young friend, who had become tired of the water; "there ought to be some way of getting out of this stream; if that boar had been good enough to swim within reach of me, I might have caught hold of his tail and let him tow me to land, but I don't see any signs of anything like that to help me."

It may be set down as fortunate that the young man was not given the opportunity he had in mind, for the wild boar is an unsafe animal to trifle with. But when Dudley was beginning to feel hopelessly perplexed as to how he was to leave the stream and make solid earth, the answer suddenly presented itself.

A little below, the current made a sweeping bend, and a log projected far enough from shore to offer a chance of his leaping to it from the tree which was serving him as a raft.

"It's a pretty good jump," reflected Dudley, measuring the distance with his eye, "but I can do it with a running start, and I think I can get that."

He drew himself carefully up, so as to fling one leg over the trunk, the base of which pointed toward land. The action of the tornado had washed most of the soil from the prong-like roots, and there were not enough branches

in the way to prevent a dash of eight or ten feet from where he bestrode the tree to its extremity. Provided he did not slip, he would gain the start that is always so helpful to a leaper, and he made ready for the brief spurt.

Fortunately the tree was large enough to bear his weight without sinking to an inconvenient depth. Carefully balancing himself, he awaited the right moment, and, walking cautiously for a couple of steps, he began to run, so arranging his progress, that he placed one foot on the end of the trunk and then, gathering his muscles, jumped straight for the motionless log.

And the instant Dudley did this, he would have given anything in the world had he refrained, for in the act of leaving the tree and launching out into the air, he perceived that it was not a log upon which he was about to land but a sleeping crocodile!

The saurian was of immense size, being more than twenty feet in length. The dark, ridged back exposed to the sun, and the rear, partly imbedded in the soft mud, were so like a log that the mistake was natural on the part of the youth. Added to which, it must be remembered that as it lay thus, it did not give the faintest sign of life.

Dudley Mayson was a fleet runner, but it may be doubted whether he ever made better time than directly after his feet landed on the crocodile, which had no notice of his coming, being in a doze with both of its piggish eyes closed. With all the speed of which the terrified boy was capable, he dashed over the corrugated back, but had not gone the whole distance, when he felt it move beneath him. In a twinkling, Dudley shot forward, as if from a springboard, and passing half the length of the huge reptile, he leaped to shore and plunged headlong into the jungle. A glance backward showed the monster twisting about in the current, as if searching for a titbit for his dinner, but the fugitive waited to see no more, and did not stop running until he had gone a hundred yards.

“My gracious!” he gasped; “that was the most awful thing that ever happened to me; I don’t understand why he didn’t open his mouth and take me in; I’ll never forget, as long as I live, how I felt the second after making the leap, and I knew I was going to land on the head of the biggest crocodile I ever heard of.”

The truth was that at this sultry hour, the sluggish reptile was sunning himself, as his species are fond of doing. He was so far removed from the path of the tornado that he

had not been disturbed by it, and was probably fast asleep. Had he been awake, it is quite probable that, as the boy left the floating tree, the vast jaws would have parted, and, instead of alighting on the back of the crocodile, he would have dropped into his cavernous mouth, and the adventures of our young friend would have ended then and there.

But it was Dudley's activity that saved him. By the time the crocodile was fairly awake and looking around to learn who was running over his roof, the lad was beyond reach. Even then had the reptile caught a glimpse of the flying heels, he probably would have secured the fugitive, for the crocodile is a tremendous traveller for a short distance from the water. But the youth had eluded him and his escape was certainly remarkable.

Do you know the difference between an alligator and crocodile? Let me tell you.

The alligator as compared with the true crocodile has a shorter and flatter head; it has cavities or pits in the upper jaw, into which the four long teeth of the under jaw are received. The crocodile has mere notches between the teeth. The formation described makes the head of the alligator broader and the snout more obtuse than that of the crocodiles.

The alligator is not so aquatic as its brother. It frequents swamps and marshes and often basks on the dry ground during the day, in the heat of the sun. They are the most active at night and often bellow loudly. They have great power in their tails, and a large alligator can easily overturn a canoe. They live mainly on fish, but devour other kinds of flesh. The females lay their eggs sometimes numbering four-score or more, in the mud, leaving the sun to hatch them. The mother shows much affection for her young, and watches closely over them, despite which they are often eaten by vultures, fishes and the cannibalistic old males.

The fiercest alligators are found in the south of the United States, as far up the Mississippi as the Red River. The mailed hides are such a protection that a rifle bullet will glance off as if from a sloping rock. A shot in or directly over one of the eyes, or behind a fore-leg, where the skin is comparatively thin, is fatal.

The alligators in South America are known as Caymans, which is probably an Indian name. In that country, they have the *spectacled cayman*, so called on account of a prominent bony rim surrounding the orbit of each eye. Alli-

gators are not found in any part of the world except America, which has also a few crocodiles.

Now as to the crocodile. His body is protected by square bony plates, instead of scales as with other saurians, the skull is more solid, the lungs not descending into the abdomen, while he is like the mammalia and birds in the structure of his heart. He is lizard-like in form, tremendously voracious, and has a tail flattened at the sides so as to give him powerful propulsion through the water. The fore feet have five toes, and the hind feet four, only the three inner ones being armed with claws, with the feet more or less webbed. If you are ever pursued by a crocodile, your best chance of escaping is by a series of quick turns, it being difficult for the animal to follow a sinuous course. They frequent fresh waters and estuaries in the warm parts of the world, but neither Europe nor Australia, so far as known, contain any, some being found, as stated, in the United States.

Returning to Dudley Mayson, after the scare he had received, he waited until sure he was not pursued by his fearful enemy, when he carefully drew the charge of his rifle and reloaded it from the flask of powder that had not been

touched by water during the general overturning caused by the tornado.

“Now I am ready for business,” he said with some satisfaction, “though I should feel a good deal more comfortable if Nughwa were with me. He can’t be very far off, and it seems to me that I ought to find my way to camp. It was curious that we should have located it right in the path of the cyclone. I suppose father would call that zephyr a tornado or hurricane, but it deserves the name of the terrors of our own Kansas and the West.

“I think it tumbled me along at the rate of two or three miles a minute. I remember turning a dozen somersaults, and if I had struck a tree I should have gone right through it, unless it got the start, and went through me first. I suppose the people in this part of the world get used to such flurries and don’t mind them more than we mind thunder storms at home, but I hope I shall never be caught again by one of them.”

Dudley Mayson decided that the most feasible plan to find his companion was to retrace his steps until within sight of the stream, which needed to be followed only a short distance to cross the track of the tempest. By such a course, he would avoid the common error of per-

sons placed in his situation and not journey in a circle.

He had not been long enough in the company of Nughwa for the two to frame a code of signals. He had called his name several times, while afloat in the water, but without any response. He would have repeated the call, but for the fear that it would draw the attention of less desirable denizens of the jungle. There were too many such for him to run a risk that could be avoided. Doubtless, if no harm had befallen the native, he was making a hunt for the youth. *He* was the one therefore to summon Dudley, instead of the latter calling to him. That Nughwa did not do so must have been because he did not think it safe.

But what of the crocodile?

The youth had seen one of those frightful reptiles—which, in his estimation, was one too many—and nothing more likely than that others were basking near. If they should catch sight of a plump American boy sauntering along the stream, nothing was more probable than a desperate scramble as to which should make a dinner upon him, with the end that he would be divided among the whole lot.

Dudley believed he could elude the danger by keeping a goodly distance between himself

and the river, though near enough to make sure of the course of the stream, and on the alert to escape running into any trap. This was the theory upon which he acted, hopeful of the best results.

What most impressed him at this juncture was the striking contrast between the soft calm of the jungle and the terrific turmoil that had prevailed a short time before. The same luxurious, dreamy languor seemed to enfold nature that had charmed the senses of the lad upon his first entrance into the tropics. Scarcely a breath of air rustled the tree-tops, and the atmosphere, cooled by the electric interchange, was as delicious as a fainting invalid could crave. Gazing around, the lad was unable to see any evidence of the late stupendous strife. The only sign that caught his eye was a leaf, here and there, eddying far aloft, as if it had not yet recovered from its bewilderment and was timid about venturing upon the earth again. The sky itself wore a deeper blue.

“Perhaps I am mistaken, and it looks that way because I felt so blue when turning flip-flaps so fast,” he said, “but I thank the Lord for the way He brought me through it all.”

CHAPTER IV

A DISPUTE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS

BY THIS time Dudley Mayson was in sight of the stream which he meant should serve him as a guide, and paused and listened.

Hardly a sound broke the stillness of the jungle, and it seemed to him that there must be little danger, so long as he kept his senses with him.

“I suppose that crocodile has resumed his nap, but he must have been mad to think a fellow like me landed on his roof and ran to the eaves, without his taking me in. Suppose he had opened one eye, as I leaped,” reflected the youth with a shudder. “He would have swung those jaws apart like a couple of barn doors, and I would have gone down as Jonah went down the throat of the whale. I should dearly love to send a bullet into one of his eyes or into his body back of the fore leg.”

The temptation to carry out this scheme was

so strong, that Dudley did not abandon it until after some minutes' reflection. It was hardly on account of any fear of what might be the consequences to himself, but rather because of the waste of time involved. The most important business in hand was to effect a meeting with Nughwa. Should this prove impossible, the only course left to the lad was to journey alone the rest of the way home. Such a prospect might well cause misgiving if not dismay. Thus far, his guide had taken advantage of the comparatively well marked trails, but there was no saying how far these extended. Perhaps their course soon changed and it would be necessary to seek new ones. What success could he hope for in the intricate jungle, every part of which was unfamiliar to him?

“I wonder that Nughwa did not instruct me in some signal that if heard by any prowling beasts would not be understood. When we meet—if ever we do meet—that must be the first thing done. I wish he would call to me, but, since he doesn't do it, it is too risky for me to try it. I feel sure he is not very far off.”

It was at this juncture that the stray lad recalled a remark, made by Nughwa when on the steamer, to the effect that the hunter who looks in front of him only is a fool.

It was Dudley's ear, rather than his eye, that warned him of danger. He heard a soft rustling and was sure some wild animal was near, even though his searching glances failed to reveal its nature. The surrounding jungle was dense and the sound that alarmed the youth was so close as to suggest it was made by the stealthy approach of a beast that might leap from the undergrowth at any moment.

Dudley had waited only a minute or two, when he caught a fitting glimpse of the glossy hide of a tiger, moving through the jungle toward the stream. It was only the passing sight that the eye takes of an object as it glides among the separating and closing bushes, but it was enough for the young American, who understood what it meant.

Of all inhabitants of the jungle, the tiger is probably the most to be dreaded. His activity and strength are astounding, scientific tests have proved that he is one-fifth stronger than the lion. The "man eater" of India is absolutely without fear. He has been known to hold a whole village in a state of panic for weeks, descending upon it and carrying off one of the inhabitants, whenever hunger or the whim prompted him. He will pursue a man into his bamboo house, and tear the structure to shreds

to get at him. The tiger of Burmah and Siam may not be so terrible as his brother of Bengal, but he is none the less a fearful foe. A singular fact regarding the tiger may have escaped your notice: he is found in no continent except Asia.

The sight of the royal game sent a thrill through Dudley Mayson, despite the confidence he felt in his weapon.

“Wherever that fellow is going is where it isn’t best for me to go,” thought the youth, crouching low. The action of the beast told him that as yet the tiger had not discovered him, and Dudley did not mean he should do so, if he could prevent such discovery. No doubt he was on his way to the stream to drink and wasn’t thinking of boys. After slaking his thirst, he would withdraw and leave the path open for Dudley to continue his journey. The prudent thing therefore, for the young American to do was to keep out of sight until the animal had left the neighbourhood.

When the velvety footfalls were heard no more, Dudley Mayson concluded that the best thing for him to do was to climb a tree. He slung his rifle over his shoulder and made his way among the dense branches until fifteen or twenty feet above the ground, where he perched and awaited events.

“I have read and heard enough about tigers to know that one of them could leap up here to me as easily as a cat can spring upon a table; if this one scents me, he’ll be likely to try it; but I shall keep an eye on him, and, when about to make his jump, I shouldn’t wonder if he heard something from me.”

This self-confidence tended to soothe the nerves of the young hunter, who would have been as well pleased, however, had this specimen chosen to leave the stream by another route. You remember what the Frenchman said to the effect that it is very fine sport to hunt the tiger, but the sport is not so fine when the tiger hunts you.

The beast in which we are just now interested, moved with his stealthy, swinging tread toward the water, and, as fortune would have it, was almost upon the crocodile before he noticed him. The bank was a slight declivity, no more than a couple of feet in height, and it was easy to see that the stream, like the great Meinam river, became a Nile at certain seasons of the year, and, overflowing its shallow banks, deposited a film of mud which enriched thousands of acres of the surrounding country. Carefully parting the branches before his face, Dudley Mayson saw the tiger pass down this

bank, when for a few minutes he was lost to view.

The brute glanced at the immense saurian and then seemed to decide to give him no attention until after slaking his thirst. He turned slightly to one side and began lapping the water like a cat, but all the time was watching his neighbour out of the corner of his eye. It may have been the latter was in a sullen temper because of the American boy that had so cleverly robbed him of dinner, for the tiger had swallowed only a few mouthfuls, when the reptile charged directly at him.

The sight of those formidable rows of serrated teeth would have terrified any creature, and, though the tiger may not have been alarmed, he seemed to decide to finish his draught at some other point and time. He slowly recoiled, as if too proud to turn and run, and the crocodile drew near him. Suddenly he shifted sideways, and made a furious sweep of his tail. Had it reached the tiger, it must have smashed his ribs, but with the agility for which his species is famous, he leaped lightly out of the way.

This preliminary skirmish brought the combatants to the top of the bank, where Dudley

Mayson watched every phase of the remarkable combat.

Hardly had the tail completed its half circuit, when the quadruped bounded forward and struck several lightning-like blows with his claws. He knew the vulnerable portions of his enemy's anatomy, which were underneath, and managed with astonishing skill to assail the skin where it could not resist the assault.

The brute did not need to be told that his foe had no purpose of remaining quiescent, while undergoing this vicious attack, which could not be completed at one effort, but might have to be repeated several times. It may have been that the tiger was over eager, or the pain of his wounds made the crocodile quicker in action. Be that as it may, he whirled his tail around with such celerity that it struck the side of the beast with a noise like the thump on the head of a bass drum. It looked as if the blow was fatal, for the tiger rolled rapidly over several times, snarling, growling and clawing the air, seemingly in the throes of death. But he was game to the core, and, before his enemy could repeat the terrific blow, he bounded to his feet, and, instead of running off, defiantly faced his adversary.

The latter struck again precisely as before,

and then the tiger got in his fine work. Finally the saurian rolled helplessly down the bank, like the log Dudley Mayson had mistaken him for and drifted away, the victim of his own miscalculation and rashness.

The tiger stood for some minutes watching the carcass floating away and then, satisfied that nothing more was to be feared from it, resumed his lapping of the water, wheeled about and walked leisurely into the jungle.

“You made such a good fight,” said Dudley admiringly, “that I’ll let you go.”

And yet one is tempted to wonder whether after all, it was not the tiger that let the boy go.

CHAPTER V

A STRANGE MEETING

THE fight between the tiger and crocodile was brief. Few animals come out the better from a contest with the gigantic saurian. Sometimes both are slain, and not infrequently the crocodile is the victor.

Dudley Mayson remained perched in the tree until the tiger had been given plenty of time to pass beyond hearing, when he descended to resume his hunt for Nughwa, who seemed to become the more indispensable as the difficulty of finding him increased. The afternoon was wearing away, and the lad began to feel alarmed. His situation would become serious, if obliged to attempt the journey home without the aid of the intelligent native, who had been specially sent by the missionary to take charge of his son.

“Now,” thought the latter, “I know father wouldn’t have done this, if he believed any greater danger than usual was to come to me,

though I don't see how our long tramp through the woods could be saved. There are no railways or high roads in the jungle, and the paths are not good enough for us to use the elephant, which I did hope father would send. It seems that something is out of order with my body,—ah! I have it! We stopped for rest while Nughwa went off to get food for both of us; I'm hungry!"

I have spoken of the mangosteen, which is plentiful in Farther India, and is one of the most delicious fruits in all the world. The tree grows to the height of a dozen or more feet, and the foliage is dark and as glossy as satin. Plucked from its beautiful setting and cut through the shaded green and purple of the rind, the upper half being lifted as if it were the cover of a dish, the pulp of half-transparent whiteness stands in segments, like an orange, but rimmed with darkest crimson where the rind is cut. It looks too beautiful to eat, but the rarest, sweetest essence of the tropics seems to dwell in it, as it melts on one's delighted palate.

This was the peerless fruit that nearly always was at the command of Dudley Mayson, while picking his course through the Siamese jungle. When he buried his teeth in its luscious richness,

he felt as if he could never crave any other kind of food.

“If a fellow could raise a crop of them in England or the United States, he would make his fortune, for people would spend almost their last penny to get them; I’m sure *I* should.”

You have perceived that when Nughwa and Dudley camped in the jungle, it was altogether different from a halt in an American forest. There game is sometimes so scarce that it takes a long time to find it, and you know of instances where suffering and even starvation have followed the failure to obtain food. As I have said, few persons feel any desire for animal sustenance in hot countries, where the blood needs cooling rather than heating. It is the other way with the carnivorous creatures.

“There was no need of Nughwa leaving me at all,” said Dudley Mayson to himself, “but I suppose it was because he wanted to get the choicest fruit that grows. Though I have not seen a great deal of him, I have been struck by his unselfish disposition; more than once he has forced the best upon me, without seeming to do so.

“I wonder what he will think when he comes back to camp and looks upon those uprooted trees and the general wreck and ruin. He will

fear I am buried under them and will be worried almost to death. I'd yell to him, if I wasn't afraid it would bring wild beasts to the spot. That must be the reason he keeps so mum himself, unless," added Dudley with a shudder, "*he* has been killed."

While from the beginning it would be said that the chances were greatly in favour of the native as against the young American, yet it often happens in the affairs of this world that events go the other way, for no precaution can make one immune from accident.

Following out the plan he had formed, Dudley soon arrived at the point where the tornado had careered across the water. The action of the current had cleared itself of most of the wreck and debris long before, and it was flowing as quietly as if never disturbed by so stupendous an outburst of nature.

Taking his bearings as well as he could, the youth was convinced that if he moved to the left, he would soon reach the spot, where they halted for the noon rest, when Nughwa left him, intending to be gone but a short time.

"If nothing has befallen him, he and I ought to be quite near each other by that time—helloa! there he is now!"

The lad uttered this exclamation as he de-

scried a man making his way over the fallen trees and among the scattered limbs. His attire was of the scanty order peculiar to the Siamese. His head was not only without any covering, but was shaved like a Buddhist priest's, being as clean and glistening as a billiard ball. He was bare-legged and bare-footed, and wore a broad sash around his hips, descending to his knees. He was of brownish colour, stocky and well formed, and of surprising agility. He sprang forward as nimbly as a chamois, with his head bent, showing he was looking downward, as if searching for something or some one. The first glance of Dudley told him he had never seen the stranger before.

Nughwa the guide had been under the tutelage of the missionary Mayson long enough to acquire civilized tastes in the way of dress. He had learned to protect his feet with strong sandals—a sort of compromise between the ordinary shoe and nothing—but his clothing as a whole was so scanty that it was hardly worth mentioning.

The moment Dudley Mayson saw that the man was unknown to him, he asked himself whether it were prudent for them to meet. While the labours of the missionaries in Siam

had as yet brought only meagre fruit, there was no special enmity or ill-will between the natives and foreigners. The former are not such fanatical slaves to conservatism as the Chinese, and it is scarcely possible, therefore, that any such outbreak as the late Boxer uprising can ever occur in Farther India.

But in such meetings as the one that impended, time and place must be remembered. Man and boy were well removed from the friends of either. They were virtually alone in the vast jungle, where an American might well feel some misgiving over meeting one of his own countrymen of whom he knew little or nothing.

“He hasn’t any gun,” thought Dudley, “and I should be ashamed to own that I was afraid of him, but he may belong to a gang of criminals, and it will be wise for me to have nothing to do with him until we are properly introduced.”

All this time, the stranger was drawing near, but quite slowly, since he carefully scrutinized every foot of ground in front of him; but he was likely to raise his head at any moment and see the youth. Dudley had only to stoop down where he had halted. He did so, and crept a few feet to a fallen tree inclosed in so much dense

vegetation, that a searcher would have had to step almost upon him or draw apart the foliage in order to find his hiding place.

A shadowy misgiving lingered with the youth.

“It may be he caught sight of me before I did of him and dropped his eyes so as to throw me off my guard. At any rate, he is coming this way and must pass very close.”

Listening intently in the stillness, the youth was soon able to locate the stranger by the faint sounds that crossed the brief space. He heard the bare feet strike the ground as he came down from one of the prostrate trees, and then the gentle friction of the bark, when he stepped upon another obstruction in his path.

The fact that several minutes passed, during which nothing was heard, convinced Dudley that the native had paused from some cause or other. Yielding to that curiosity which might have been fatal in some circumstances, the young American noiselessly thrust his head through the bushes, and, removing his hat, raised his head high enough to peer over the prostrate trunk.

The native was standing motionless less than fifty feet distant. While his body was facing Dudley, his head was turned to the left, as if he had discovered something in that direction

which claimed his attention. The youth paused long enough to glance toward the same point of the compass, but could see nothing unusual, and quickly shrunk into his hiding place again.

The fact that the stranger had been facing toward him a moment before and was certain to do so again, satisfied Dudley that he would pass perilously near his concealment. The remote prospect of detection brought chagrin to the youth, who would have felt exceedingly foolish had the stranger parted the bushes and peeped in at him.

“How shall I explain my sneaking behind a tree like that? Of course neither of us can understand what the other says, but it will be my *actions* that will speak. However, I’ll take the chances.”

He made sure of one thing,—his rifle was ready for instant call. No native of the country should find him unprepared for a meeting.

Sh! the fellow was moving again. The impact of his feet on the earth gave out the faintest possible noise, but was sufficient for the keen ear to note. The man was walking over the trunk of the tree under which the youth was nestling. More than that, he halted almost directly over him.

It was this that led Dudley to believe the

native had seen him first, and was having a little of his own peculiar fun, somewhat as a cat plays with a mouse. The belief added to the resentment of the youth in hiding, and he compressed his lips with characteristic resolution.

“If he tries to fool with me, he will learn that it is dangerous to trifle with a native born American. Even if I haven’t the Stars and Stripes to wave over my hiding place, I’ve got a gun and am not afraid to use it.”

It isn’t probable that the native stood thus for more than two or three minutes, and yet it seemed three times as long to Dudley Mayson who feared he would be betrayed by the beating of his heart. Then the bare feet moved along the bark to the base, and the man stepped down to the ground. One or two steps seemed to be audible, but the lad could not feel assured on that point, and waited for quite an interval before making any further move.

Dudley was mystified. From what had occurred, he was almost certain the native knew where he was crouching. What had been his purpose in coming so near to the foreigner and then going away without word or action?

“If he saw me, he saw my gun; he has no weapon, not even a knife, so far as I can tell, though it may be hidden about him; he must

have known I could shoot him down whenever the whim took me; he ran no little risk himself, though I don't know whether he was trusting my sense of right or trying to play upon my fears."

Waiting until the native had been given plenty of time in which to make off, Dudley once more pushed the bushes from the front of his face, and cautiously thrust his head and shoulders through. He could hear nothing, and, after a slight pause, bareheaded as before, he slowly straightened up until above the prostrate tree, when he scanned everything in his field of vision.

"I don't see anything of him; it must be after all, he has gone and left me to myself—no! I'm blessed if he has!"

Twenty feet away and a little behind the youth, the stranger was standing and looking fixedly at him. He must have stepped from beyond the trunk of a tree on the edge of the swath cut by the tornado, for Dudley had glanced over that section a moment before without seeing him.

That which had drawn the attention of the youth in that direction was a peculiar grunt, like an exclamation, that seemed to be the utterance of the word "*Hooah!*" whose meaning

of course was unknown to the youth. The latter involuntarily started, as if frightened by the sudden discovery that the other was almost at his elbow. He quickly pulled himself together, however, and returned the stare of the other. Why should Dudley feel afraid of a single man, without any firearms, when the lad himself held one in his grasp?

But there was something uncanny in the situation. For the first time, our friend had a fair look at the countenance of the stranger. The face was oblong, the features even, and the general appearance not unprepossessing. The bare poll gave him a peculiar look, but it was the eyes that caught and held the attention of the lad. They were round, large, projecting and as black as midnight, with a glare that suggested a wild animal. He looked straight at the intruder, as if he would pierce him through, and it took all of Dudley's self-command to return the sharp scrutiny.

The memory of the apparent timidity he had shown nerved the youth, whose only fear was that the stranger might utter a signal that would draw his friends to the spot. In that event, the situation would become embarrassing to say the least, but none the less the American was resolved to hold his ground.

It did not take long for this mutual stare to become trying to the younger member, who began to ask himself how long it was to last and in what manner it would terminate. He hit upon an expedient.

“Who are you and what do you want?”

When Dudley asked the question, he did not suppose that a word would be understood by the other, but to his amazement, the reply came in the form of another question:

“Who you? What want?”

“I’m your friend, if you act right: what do *you* want?”

“Hooah! Christian, eh?”

“Yes,” was the prompt response from one who would have died before denying his faith.

“Me kill!” said the other, slipping his hand beneath the sash that inclosed the middle of his body, and drawing forth a frightful knife, with a handle fully a foot long.

“I don’t think you will kill any Christians just yet, old chap,” replied Dudley, drawing back the hammer of his rifle, and partly raising the weapon.

The native took a couple of steps forward and then stopped. It did not require his partial knowledge of the English tongue to read the meaning of the action of the sturdy youth, who

emphasized his warning by also stepping forward, as if to meet the other.

The couple were not brought so near that a single bound, such as the native no doubt could make, would enable him to use his formidable weapon; but Dudley Mayson did not mean to be caught off his guard. All he had to do was to bring his gun to a level, as he could do in a flash, and press the trigger. Indeed, it was not necessary to shift the position of the weapon at all. It could be fired from the hip, the interval being so short that it was impossible to miss.

“If you want to attack a Christian—though he isn’t much of one—why do you wait? Come on and learn how quick that particular Christian will let daylight through you!” said Dudley in a slow, even voice, and it is to be supposed that his words were understood by the man to whom they were addressed.

The next remark of the native was still more astonishing:

“Eh, Christian; missionary Christian!”

“If you refer to my father, you are right, for there isn’t a truer Christian living than he,—Mr. George Mayson, whose home is not so many miles from here. What do you know about Mr. Mayson?”

“Me hate him,—me kill him!”

“Do you mean to say you *have* killed or hurt him or any member of his family?” demanded Dudley in a flame of anger; “if you have harmed a hair of his head or of his wife or child, I’ll give you two minutes to pray to your heathen gods, before I send you to keep them company.”

And Dudley Mayson would have done that very thing, had the native said he had dared to commit such a crime. Fortunately, he did not mean that.

“No kill—not yet—bime by—then kill you—hooah!”

“O, that’s it! That isn’t so bad; well, I’m waiting to have you begin with me; what’s the use of being so long about it?”

Dudley now brought his rifle to his shoulder, resolved that his purpose should not be mistaken.

The answer of the native was as sudden as unexpected. With another “*Hooah!*” he whirled and dashed into the jungle at full speed, dodging from side to side, as if to disconcert the aim of him whom he expected to fire with every second of time. But Dudley Mayson had no such intention and let him depart in peace.

CHAPTER VI

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

BY THIS time Dudley Mayson had become so disturbed over his failure to meet Nughwa, that he decided to signal to him. Placing his thumb and forefinger against the end of his tongue, and shoving them between his lips, he emitted a blast that would have done credit to a locomotive. He repeated it several times, feeling that, inasmuch as he had undertaken to call to his guide, he might as well be thorough with it.

“He will know that no wild animal did that,” was his thought; “at any rate, I don’t know of any that is capable of doing it. I used to call the boys that way in my own country, when we were a mile apart.”

He listened, but nothing in the nature of a response reached his ears. It seemed to be the hour when the denizens of the jungle were taking their siesta and none of them cared to be disturbed.

“This can’t be far from the spot; can it be anything has happened to Nughwa?” he asked, with a thrill of alarm; “it may be—*st!*”

At a point no more than a hundred yards away and to the right, he heard a sound which he recognized as the trumpeting of elephants. He remembered that on a visit to the great travelling menagerie of the famous Barnum, he had noticed the same cry, so there could be no mistake on his part.

“I suppose I might have expected something of that kind,” growled the youth; “I wonder whether they learned from my signal that a boy of about my size is groping through the wood; but I don’t think they have a very keen scent and the jungle is so dense that I ought to be able to keep out of their sight.”

He waited several minutes, on the alert, but saw and heard nothing further. He began to hope the bulky creatures had taken the alarm and made off. Curious to learn more of them, he moved stealthily through the forest, often pausing and parting the undergrowth in his front, and peering in every direction, with all his senses keyed to the highest point. Suddenly he was startled by a ponderous crashing, so close that he instinctively leaped behind the nearest tree.

The disturbance ceased as abruptly as it had broken out, and once more he advanced inch by inch as may be said. He was soon rewarded by the most wonderful sight upon which he had ever looked. An immense elephant was leisurely plucking the tender herbage from the bushes and trees about him, his head being raised and the end of his flexible trunk reaching so far aloft, that everything on the ground must have been invisible to him. Standing thus, his side was toward the lad, who thus gained the best view of him. His foraging operations had so crushed and cleared the vegetation immediately around him, that nothing obscured the view, the beam-like legs being visible down to the knees.

The sight of an elephant thus employed certainly was not unusual in that part of the world, but the animal upon which the rapt Dudley was gazing was of a light creamy colour in most of the parts of his body—one ear being noticeably light, the back rather dark and growing paler lower down, suggestive of the shading often shown by certain reptiles.

In other words, Dudley Mayson was looking upon a *white elephant*, the animal which for hundreds of years has received the highest possible honours in Burmah, Siam and all through

Farther India. The belief there, as you may know, is that such a creature is the incarnation of some future Buddha. All are, therefore, held in the most sacred regard and no honours are too great to be shown them. The court and country which come into the possession of such a great treasure are believed to be more fortunate through such ownership than from any and all other means.

Dudley Mayson had read and heard of these creatures, and he stood for some time staring in open-mouthed astonishment at the huge brute, forgetting that he might be as dangerous as any of his species.

“What a prize! I saw pictures of the white elephant on the flags of the country at Bangkok, and Nughwa told me that whoever could bring one of them to the king would make his everlasting fortune; it would take a good many boys of my size to drag off this fellow; I wish Nughwa were here.”

He looked furtively around, hoping his friend would appear in answer to the signal, whose meaning, had the call reached his ears, he must have suspected; but the native did not come forward, and Dudley turned again to view the extraordinary monster before him.

It struck the youth as remarkable that the

white elephant was alone, it being the custom of those beasts to herd together. There are instances when they wander off by themselves, notably when one survives his relations, as may be said, and finds all his friends have departed this life. When this occurs, no other family of elephants will allow the mourner to join them. If he attempts to do so, the lot set upon him, and he saves his life by taking the hint and making off. He thus becomes a social outcast, and a target for the tusks of his kind, wherever he appears. In India such an elephant is called *Goondah* or *Sawn*, and in Ceylon *Hora*, which means "rogue," the name being used because of his mischievous disposition. He will trample and destroy the gardens and truck patches of the natives out of pure wantonness, and, if the owner shows a disposition to object, will attack him. He becomes such a nuisance at times that a whole neighborhood will unite to destroy him.

The white elephant continued browsing as tranquilly as if he were an ordinary inhabitant of the jungle, instead of a prize, for whose possession barbarian kings have waged wars and slain thousands of their fellow beings, as they are likely to do for an indefinite period to come. "No use of *your* working for a living," mused

Dudley; "all you have to do is to promenade down to Bangkok, and you will become the real ruler of the country; I suppose the heathens may as well worship you as their wooden idols, for one is as sensible as the other."

Keeping himself screened, the youth continued studying the immense animal, with a curiosity which perhaps may be imagined.

"I don't understand why they call you white, for there isn't any part of you that is really of that colour. You may not be as dark as those I have seen, but the nearest you come to white is pink, and even *that* hasn't a healthy look."*

Dudley Mayson was peeping around the trunk of the tree when his hat accidentally fell from his head. You can understand how slight the noise was, and he stooped and picked it up without a thought of any consequences therefrom; but, when he looked at the elephant again, he saw that while still groping among the treetops

* "It cost me several years' negotiations, of the most delicate nature, and two hundred thousand dollars to secure my famous white elephant," the late P. T. Barnum said to the writer. "More than once my agents reported that it was impossible to get such a creature out of the country: the attempt would create a revolution. But they were shrewd fellows and they knew the value of money. A white elephant was driven through the back streets of Bangkok late at night, persuaded to step upon a waiting raft, taken down the river to a steamer and finally brought to the United States.

"When he arrived in New York, I went down the Bay on a tug to have a look at him. I don't think I was ever

with his facile trunk, he had suddenly ceased operations, and become as motionless as one of the carved figures of himself in the *Nagkon Wat* of Angkor.

“Can it be he heard me?” the astonished lad asked himself; “something has disturbed him, and I don’t see what else it can be.”

He drew back his head, and then perceived, for the first time, that the trunk of the tree behind which he had sheltered himself was hardly broad enough fully to hide his body. He noiselessly turned sideways, still standing upright, and therefore unable to observe the enormous beast.

Dudley was in that tense nervous state that he could have heard the soft rustling of the trunk among the foliage. The fact that he did not hear it was proof that the elephant was still listening.

By and by, the gentle groping was resumed.

more disgusted in my life. All the claim he had to the name of white elephant was a few pale blotches here and there on his body which were caused by some peculiar disease. He was a ‘white elephant’ indeed on my hands, but I had to make the best of it.

“In due time I was roused from my sleep, in the middle of the night at the Murray Hill Hotel, New York, with the unusual announcement that a big fire at Bridgeport had destroyed many of my animals and a large amount of property. ‘Is the white elephant among those that were burned?’ I asked. I was told that he was. ‘Thank goodness!’ I replied and resumed my broken slumber.”

The animal's misgivings had passed and he must have believed he had no cause for alarm. Waiting a brief while, Dudley peeped around the trunk again. All would have gone well, but for one of those mishaps against which no person can guard. He was suddenly seized with a desire to sneeze, and, realizing the danger of doing so, he grasped his nostrils with one hand and strove desperately to smother the outbreak, but he was too late fully to succeed. Though partially strangled, the outburst came and he knew he had betrayed himself.

If there had been any doubt on that point, it vanished the next second, when the brute trumpeted and charged directly toward the point from which the singular sound had come. No thought now of the sacred character of the white elephant. It was either his life or that of the American lad.

Thrusting out his head, Dudley saw the brute charging down upon him like a runaway locomotive. The sight was so terrifying that he brought his rifle to his shoulder, and, not pausing to take aim, let fly. Even had he known the most vulnerable point of the elephant, the shot was too hurried to be effective. Dudley fired at the massive head, which was struck a glancing blow, the bullet skimming off among

the leaves, and inflicting no harm, but merely adding to the fury of the beast, who looked as if he would trample the intervening saplings and trees under his savage tread.

Only one thing remained to be done and Dudley Mayson did it,—he turned and ran for life. No boy, however, ever succeeded in out-speeding an elephant, and, despite the exertions of the youth, who was unusually fleet of foot, the space between him and his pursuer rapidly lessened. The dense, tangled undergrowth was more of a hindrance to the fugitive than to the elephant, and the lad with an indescribable shock, saw no possible escape from the animal.

A glance over his shoulder showed the elephant so near that his trunk was raised aloft to seize the boy. A few seconds more and he would reach forward with that wonderful organ containing over fifty thousand muscles, wrap it around the body of the fugitive and dash him to the earth with a force that would drive out the breath of life.

That single glance to the rear was fatal in one respect, for a tough vine suddenly entangled itself like steel wire about the ankles of the youth, who sprawled forward on his face, his gun flying from his hands. In his despair, he felt it was useless to spring to his feet, for the

instant he did so, his enemy would be upon him. So he lay still and prayed heaven for the help which he did not believe could reach him.

With a shuddering thrill which cannot be imagined, Dudley Mayson felt the trunk of the elephant groping over his shoulders, as if seeking the best means of laying hold of him. In the terrifying moment, the poor lad was strangely sensible to trifles. He noted a peculiar step of the huge feet, a strange, half-trumpeting sound, and then a wild outcry, as if made, not by the elephant, but by some man or animal directly behind him.

With hardly a second's interval, the cry was repeated, and the second time was accompanied by a resounding slap, as if made by a person's open hand on the flank of the animal. The blow was emphasized by a most insulting epithet, which the speaker believed was understood by the creature to whom it was applied.

Whether such was the fact or not would be too much to say, but the vigorous slap was probably the cause of the brute turning in his anger, and reaching for the man who had thus insulted him. Before Dudley could quite comprehend the interruption, some one shouted:

“Run before he comes back!”

It was his old friend Nughwa, and his words

were those of wisdom. The youth knew it, and, without pausing to question or learn more, he obeyed the command with all the speed he could muster, scratching his face and hands without knowing it as he tore through the undergrowth.

CHAPTER VII

THE ELEPHANT CATCHER

IN HIS flurry, Dudley Mayson forgot his rifle that had been flung several yards distant, and, distressed for the safety of his friend, who had chivalrously assumed all the peril in order to help the lad, he paused, after running a few paces, and fixed his eyes upon the man and brute. It was in the nick of time that Nughwa had succeeded in diverting the fury of the elephant to himself, for, as I have shown, the fractional part of a minute would have seen the termination of the young American's career.

When a few seconds passed without harm befalling the native, the emotion of the youthful spectator became that of amazement at the agility of Nughwa. Dudley recalled a certain playmate in the States, whose skill in dodging pursuers was a cause of admiration to the others, and eventually led to his engagement by a circus company, but Dudley had never witnessed

anything like the performance which now took place under his eyes.

Having smitten the flank of the beast, Nughwa coolly waited till he saw the bulky head swinging around, when he repeated one of his insulting expressions, and dashed off for several rods, his course taking him away from his young friend. As was to be expected, the elephant followed, a moment or two being necessary for him to get fully under way. Then the manœuvres of the two suggested those of an ironclad trying to run down an Indian canoe. The guide was here, there and everywhere, the only spot from which he seemed to be absent being that where his massive enemy sought him.

The result of these performances, as you will note, was to draw the elephant further from Dudley Mayson, who, forgetful of his recent peril, stood silent and staring at the remarkable scene. Admiring as he did the amazing nimbleness of Nughwa, he was continually startled by the dread that he was so entangled that it was impossible for him to elude the brute, which, despite his enormous size, displayed an activity surpassing that of many quadrupeds of a third or fourth of his weight.

An involuntary exclamation escaped the youth, when he saw the trunk of the white ele-

phant extended directly over the turban of the native, who, at the critical moment, whisked to one side, and, still followed by the gigantic trunk, made a sudden dive between the forelegs of the brute and out to one side, seizing the chance for another irritating slap and impertinent references to the character of the ancestors of the animal, which, if he really understood them, must have been unpardonable.

The native could not help giving his whole attention to the elephant, and he therefore did not think of the American youth, who, it was to be presumed, knew enough to heed the advice given him, and had attended to his own safety.

“Nughwa is a wonder and no mistake,” said Dudley, “but he can’t keep this up much longer; his face is already shining with perspiration, and he must be nearly worn out. This is another case where, instead of hunting the tiger, he is hunting us; I’ve got to help Nughwa.”

But how should he do so? It was idle for Dudley to resort to insulting language, for it was not to be supposed the elephant understood English, nor would it answer for the youth to try to divert attention again to himself; *that* came near being his undoing a brief while before, and it would have been suicide for the lad

to repeat the performance. In truth he had no such thought.

‘It is plain that Nughwa’s gun isn’t loaded; if it were, he would have fired into the body of the elephant before this, and he knows where to aim; I have plenty of time now to find his heart, and I’ll do it. Well, if that doesn’t beat all creation!’

For the first time since his close call, Dudley Mayson awoke to the fact that he had no gun with him. He was bewildered for the moment and then, looking around, saw the weapon lying several yards away. Even in the exciting juncture, he smiled at his strange forgetfulness, as he ran the brief distance and snatched up the rifle and began reloading it.

This as you can understand was quite a task, since the weapon was a muzzle-loader, and he was so absorbed in the scene under his very eyes, that he often suspended his work in order to note the varying phases. He had rammed the bullet home, replaced the rod in the guard on the lower side of the barrel, and was in the act of slipping a cap on the tiny tube, when he was held motionless by what took place before him.

Unable to give any attention to Dudley, the native had manœuvred so that he and the ele-

phant were brought quite close to where the boy was standing. Although Nughwa had been a professional elephant-catcher for a good many years, it did not take him long to realize that he was in one of the most critical situations of his life. The brute was not only one of the rarest kind found in the world, but was exceptionally active, and soon pressed the native harder than he had ever been pressed before. The wrath of the brute was overpowering; he gave no further thought to the youth against whom his fury was first turned, and was bent on avenging himself upon the miscreant that had dared not only to inflict a personal indignity upon him, but had slurred his ancestors. Nughwa still grasped his rifle, and it would seem that, had he been able he would have shot his foe, for again and again, it looked as if that necessity had come. Since, too, he knew better than to miss a vital spot, Dudley Mayson was warranted in thinking his weapon was empty.

Such, however, was not the fact. Had the elephant been other than a white one, Nughwa would have slain him long before, but the frugal fellow had an eye to the future. He would not destroy such a treasure until it became an absolute choice between that and his own life. Although it looked more than once as if such a

crisis had arrived, the elephant-catcher was not quite convinced.

Dudley Mayson was sure this crisis had come when he saw his friend overtaken by the same mishap that had flung the American himself to the ground. The native was dodging and leaping here and there, when he, too, was entangled in the running vines that were everywhere and fell on his side.

The youth hastily slipped a cap on the tube, drew the hammer back to a full cock, and, sinking to one knee, aimed at the elephant. He was standing diagonally toward him at that moment and Dudley sighted at the cavity which is presented just back of the fore leg in all animals, when they take a step forward.

“A bullet sent there must reach his heart; at any rate it will do enough damage to give Nughwa the help he must have.”

The fall of the native was like that of a ball of India rubber, and he bounded up in the same instant that his body struck the ground. In the effort, he caught a momentary glimpse of his young friend, kneeling with his rifle levelled.

“Don’t shoot! don’t shoot!” called Nughwa angrily.

“Why not?” asked Dudley, whose forefinger was pressing the trigger.

“I’ll shoot him, if there’s any need; put down your gun!”

“*You’ll* shoot him,” muttered Dudley, lowering his weapon; “all I’ve got to say is you’re a simpleton if your gun is loaded and you don’t use it.”

The occasion did not favour conversation, and the guide said nothing more; he was not yet through with the brute, which persisted in forcing his attentions upon him. With his eyes on the vast bulk, and on the alert for every movement, Nughwa, however, called out impatiently:

“Why don’t you do as told? Get farther away, and do it *now!*”

The native was angry and Dudley Mayson could not mistake the fact. He walked slowly backward, holding his gun in front and seeing and thinking only of his friend, who seemed to be involved beyond the possibility of escape.

It looked as if the running vines that filled the undergrowth with their wiry network were doomed to play the mischief that afternoon. It was natural that Dudley should forget them in the excitement of the moment, and inevitable therefore, that he should have another fall. But he did not lose his hold upon his weapon, and

was on his feet again almost as soon as his friend.

It would seem that any further delay in firing on the part of Nughwa was unpardonable, when as he staggered backward again, partly thrown from his feet, he had to fling up his gun to ward off the trunk that was once more reaching for him. But he refused to harm the creature, which, with a natural professional instinct, he hoped to make captive some time, and, with inimitable dexterity, leaped behind a sapling, too small to yield more than a partial refuge for the moment.

But the temporary respite gave the chance for Nughwa to repeat his exasperating and wonderful performance of a few minutes before. Crouching low, he slipped under the vaguely groping trunk and once more dashed between the beam-like front legs. This time, however, he neither slapped the animal nor uttered a word.

As a consequence, the white elephant was bewildered, and for a minute or two seemed to lose his proverbial sagacity. He reached here and there with his trunk, and, failing to grasp his victim, curled it aloft and trumpeted. Then with a stupidity of which he ought to have been ashamed, he got the idea that his man was hid-

ing somewhere about the base of the sapling, when in truth, there was not space for a mouse to conceal himself. In a paroxysm of rage, he drove one of his tusks into the soft earth at the foot of the small tree, and heaved resistlessly upward. The sapling, roots and all, was drawn forth as if it had been merely stuck into the ground. The dirt flew in every direction and dripped like perspiration from the massive front of the jungle-monarch, who in the grandeur of his wrath, stared around for the man whom he meant to annihilate.

He did not see him, though Dudley Mayson did. The native, without speaking, caught the stare of his young friend and motioned for him to remain silent and keep out of sight. Recalling how much more the native knew of the situation than himself, the lad obeyed. Fortunately, he not only gained a secure screen, but at the moment of availing himself of it, the head of the elephant was turned away, and he therefore failed to note the act. Had he observed it, it is likely he would have charged him, and a part of the previous performance would have been repeated. It is more than probable that self-defence would have compelled the killing of the white elephant, to the inconsolable regret of Nughwa.

By common consent, the species is regarded as among the most intelligent of all quadrupeds. It may be doubted whether any animal excepting certain breeds of dogs surpass him. Although the specimen to which we have been giving attention was confused for a brief while by the puzzling acts of the man who had captured so many of his kind, yet he now betrayed something of his usual sense.

He had engaged in a "wrestle" with a biped and was outwitted. The struggle had been a fair one and there could be no doubt of the result. Why, therefore, should he keep up the useless contest?

Nughwa suspected the nature of the problem that was crystallizing in that prodigious brain, and he could not throw away the delight of victory. He boldly stepped forth into full view, swung his gun over his head, and uttered a tantalizing shout, accompanied by remarks that were anything but respectful to the party to whom they were addressed.

The picture was a striking one. Man, boy and animal formed the corners of a big triangle, and for a few seconds were as motionless as the trunks of the trees around them. Grasping his gun with one hand, Dudley Mayson leaned his head just far enough to one side to allow him

to peep around the bark of the tree that shielded him from the sight of the elephant; Nughwa, who had been thus concealed, had come out into the open and assumed a defiant pose, after flinging his disrespectful words at the white elephant; the latter faced the native, and, strangely enough, looked straight at him without movement or sound on his part.

To Dudley Mayson it looked as if the brute were debating whether it was worth while to renew the attempt to extinguish the native. Suddenly he trumpeted and took a single step toward Nughwa. The latter brandished his gun and called, as if to tantalize him into coming nearer. Instead of doing so, he stood still, surveyed the dusky native, and then, flinging aloft his trunk, trumpeted again. Then he swung ponderously round and plunged into the jungle. Words could not have said more plainly:

“I want nothing more to do with you; you are not worth my notice!”

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING ELEPHANTS

NUGHWA had a vein of waggery in his composition and when he saw the white elephant "turn tail" and make off, as if in a panic of fear, he shook with mirth. He made scarcely any noise in doing so, for, like the majority of hunters, he had learned long before the virtue of silence and the danger of noise when in the depths of the forest or jungle. Dudley Mayson, being a rugged American youngster, was expected to get all the fun possible out of any and everything, and he laughed harder than his companion, as anyone passing near could have told from the sounds of his merriment.

And yet Nughwa could not forget one momentous fact: their affray had taken place with a *white* elephant, undoubtedly the most valuable animal in the world. He had disappeared in the wood, and yet he could not be far off, nor was he likely to stray to any distance for some days, and perhaps weeks to come.

Before referring further to him, the native inquired as to Dudley's experience since their separation about the middle of the day. When the lad had told him everything, his friend remarked in a reverential voice, as he glanced upward:

"It was our heavenly Father who took care of you and of me, though I have not been in as much danger as you."

"There can be no doubt of that, Nughwa; He never forgets us for a single moment; father told me you were a Christian and it makes my heart glad to know it."

"I try hard and I trust I do not displease that Father, a great deal; He is kinder to me than I deserve."

"So He is to all His children; what would become of us if we were punished as we ought to be punished? but, Nughwa, I don't see how you can come any nearer death than you did a little while ago; again and again, I was sure it was all over with you, and my heart was in my mouth all the time."

"I am sure it looked that way to you."

"Did it not to *you*?"

"Almost,—not quite; I did not forget that my gun was loaded, and when the moment came,

which I prayed would not come, I could slay the elephant.”

“What is the best spot to aim at, when you wish to bring one of them down?”

“Hunters do not all think the same. You have heard of Andersson, who has slain scores of elephants; he says the shoulder, near the lower edge of the ear is the right spot, while others favour the shattering of the fore leg, which renders the brute helpless at once. I have never used that method for it seems cruel. In Ceylon, the practice is to send the rifle ball into the head, either through the temple, or the hollow above the eye, or a spot directly over the trunk, where the skull-structure is weak, and the brain is easily reached.”

“Which is your method?”

“The one I have just told you about, but not many can use it.”

“Why not?”

“It is too great a strain upon the hunter’s nerves; he must be as cool as if not the slightest danger threatens, and not fire until the charging elephant is within fifteen paces. Then, if he fails to hit the exact point, it is all over with him, for he has no time to make ready to fire a second time.”

“I made a sort of blind shot at this fellow

when he was rushing down upon me; where was it I struck him?"

With a grin, Nughwa replied:

"I did not know you struck him; I am sure the white elephant did not know it either."

"That may be, but he would have known it the last time, for I had my gun pointed at the spot just behind his fore leg; *that*, I am sure, would have brought him down."

"I am glad you are sure for I am not; if you are ever driven into a corner by an angry elephant, don't try to make the shot you just spoke of, nor the one I told you I make, if the chance is given me, but aim for the shoulder, close to the lower edge of the ear or break the fore leg. As I told you, it is cruel, but sometimes we have to be cruel in order to save our lives."

I do not suppose there is a boy or girl who is reading these lines that has not seen an elephant,—probably a large number of them, for they have become so common as to attract little attention. Yet there are many interesting facts concerning them, a few of which may be strange to you. The huge limbs are very thick and strong, as they have to be in order to sustain their immense weight. These are very straight, each bone resting vertically on the one beneath it. The ancients used to think the

limbs had no joints, and consequently the elephant could not lie down, or, if down, could not rise again. Yet the legs are flexible enough to permit him to run almost as fast as a horse, to climb steep mountains and to indulge in playful antics. You have seen the trick elephants stand on their heads, sit up like trained dogs and gambol as if they were puppies. They are surer-footed than horses or mules on rough mountain roads.

The elephant often sleeps while on his feet, and perhaps leaning against some rock or tree, which he may have been using for a rubbing post. If you have ever seen one of them lie down, you noticed that he does not bring his hind legs under him, like other quadrupeds, but extends them backward, as you do when kneeling. This enables him to rise with little effort. When he increases his gait above a walk, it is neither a trot nor a gallop, and it is not changed in adding to or diminishing his speed. His bony structure will not permit him to leap like a horse and other animals.

The trunk is one of the most wonderful organs found in the animal kingdom. As I have intimated, it contains about fifty thousand muscles, all capable of distinct action. The elephant can coil it around a tree and pull it up by

the roots; he can pluck the smallest leaf or lift a pin from the ground. You have noticed the resemblance to a finger and thumb at the extremity, and surely a hand could not be capable of greater delicacy of action. It is used much oftener as a weapon of offence and defence than the tusks. All the food eaten by the brute is carried to the mouth by the trunk, and it also sucks up the necessary water which is discharged into the mouth. The valves at the base of the trunk prevent the water from going too far up the nostrils. With the same organ, the elephant scatters dust over his sides and back, or switches away flies or fans himself, by means of a leafy branch, or throws water in sport at his companions.

The animal has a keen sense of smell and of hearing. His eyes are small and his flapping ears of enormous size. They are much larger in the African than in the Asiatic elephant. The latter is not so intelligent as those found elsewhere. The great Jumbo, the largest ever seen in captivity, was a native of Africa.

I could not, in the space at command, tell you a tenth part of the interesting peculiarities of the largest of living quadrupeds. To me, however, one of the most singular facts—if it be a fact—is that in Ceylon, where tens of thousands

of them roam the forests, no one has ever been able to find the skeleton or remains of an elephant which died a natural death. Those slain by hunters are only a fraction of the immense number living in that large island, and the questions have often been asked and never answered: "What becomes of the elephants that die of old age as thousands of them must die annually? Why can we never come upon their remains?" I leave the problem for you to solve.

"Nughwa, you are a native of this country, and can tell me why the people think so highly of the white elephant."

The swarthy countenance showed that the guide's conversion to Christianity had not freed his nature of all the remnants of superstition.

"He is the king of elephants and has been worshipped for many centuries in Burmah and Siam. You ask me why my people think so highly of him and I answer because he deserves it."

"But why does such a simple thing as his colour make him sacred?"

"Because it wouldn't be given him unless his sacredness deserved it."

Nughwa's logic travelled in a circle, and the

lad did not think it worth while to follow it farther.

“I am told many think some future Buddha dwells in him, but I have heard that many of them are called white when they are not. Was the specimen we saw a good one?”

“One of the finest; there is none in Bangkok that equals him; he is a prize worth a fortune to whomsoever can capture him. When you see a white elephant,” continued the native, “it means prosperity and happiness to the kingdom. Two hundred years ago there was one in Siam, which kept three nations at war for half a century for his possession. He caused the death of five kings and thousands of soldiers. But he was a pure white one, though very small. One of my ancestors took part in the war which he caused, and I would fight for a white elephant to-day, because my Christianity does not forbid it.”

“They must have treated the animal well.”

“So they did and so they will always do. The white elephant on a red ground is the flag of our country, and whoever captures one and delivers him to the king will be made wealthy and be honoured all the rest of his life.”

“Has the king any of them in his possession?”

“Yes—several. The court is never without them, for there seems to be just enough in Burmah, Siam and Cambodia, to keep the kings supplied. In the older times, whenever the ruler of any tributary province captured a white elephant, the road was cleared for him through the jungle, that his feet and body might not be scratched. If to the northward, he was brought down the Meinam on a big raft, and was fed all the way on the delicacies of the country. No prince, and not even the king himself, could be treated with greater honour.

“When he arrived at the capital, all the merchants in the city were commanded to call upon and pay their respects to him; and as each caller made a present of half a ducat, the amount was large. Every white elephant has a house of his own, where there are plenty of golden ornaments and his food is put before him in silver vessels. Each day, when he goes to the river to wash, he walks under a canopy of gold or silk, carried by six or eight men, while others parade in front, playing on drums and *shawns*. Our chief ruler has many titles, but his proudest one is King of the White Elephants.”

“Have you ever seen any wild before to-day?”

“Two years ago, I went with your father, the

good missionary, on a hunt in the forests of Dong-Phya-Phia, to the north of Keng Khoe, and there we saw a young one of a cream color. I used to be an elephant-catcher before I became a Christian, and I made up my mind that I would capture the animal and take him to the king. I had to go to the town for ropes, but when I came back, he was still browsing on the bank with three others. Before I could get near them, they went to bathe, and stood there for an hour, flinging the water over their big bodies, while I lay hid in the wood, waiting for them to come out, since it was of no use to try to take him while in the stream.

“What took place was the strangest thing in the world, and I could never understand how it happened. Something became the matter with the white elephant, and he fell down in the water and acted just like a swimmer when he is caught with the cramp. His companions saw he was in trouble and tried to assist him. They got their tusks and trunks under him and placed themselves so as to help him out, but it was no use. While I lay there watching, he went down flat in the muddy current and floated off as dead as a log of wood. I need not tell you how disappointed I was, for it was the loss of great wealth that was almost in my hands.”

“Was he finer than the one we saw to-day?”

“No; I never saw one the equal of him who came so near killing you.”

“And so near slaying you too.”

“No; not so near as you thought; I had to move nimbly, but you saw he never got hold of me.”

“Wouldn't it be a wonderful stroke of fortune, Nughwa, if we could capture the fellow who can't be very far off?”

“In truth it would.”

“How I wish we might succeed.”

“*We can!*”

Dudley Mayson turned his head quickly, suspecting his friend of jesting, but the dusky fellow was never more in earnest.

CHAPTER IX

A REMINISCENCE

WHAT a prospect! Here was Dudley Mayson, come all the way from the other side of the world to make his home with his loved parents and sister, and, hardly was he landed in the interesting country of Siam, when the dazzling hope of capturing one of the famous white elephants of that kingdom, was held up before him. Ordinarily, it would have been only the wild dream of a young enthusiast, with hardly one chance in a thousand of success, but the man who awoke the thrilling thought was a veteran elephant-catcher, without a superior in his peculiar profession. Even then the scheme would have been quixotic, except for the knowledge that the grand prize was in the neighbourhood.

“You really mean what you have said, Nughwa?”

“I do; the hope came to me when I first laid eyes on this animal, who stirred up things for

us; I shall do all that can be done to capture the beast. Come!"

The resolute Siamese strode through the dense jungle with a quick, elastic step, as if the task he had assumed was of easy accomplishment. The excited youth was almost upon his heels and plied him with questions.

"You observed one fact," said the guide; "the white elephant, in fleeing, took a course to the eastward, which is the one we must follow to reach the missionary station of Wahta-Shat, where live your parents, and more than a hundred native converts."

"Then, as we say in my country, we shall kill two birds with one stone."

"I have heard your good father use those words when speaking of other matters, so I understand what you mean; yes, I hope we shall kill two birds with one stone."

Still Dudley was not clear in his mind as to the method by which the tempting prize was to be captured.

"We met the white elephant, and but for you I should have lost my life; any one less skilful than you would have been slain by him. Now, if we overtake him, how will the situation be changed? If we could not make him prisoner

a little while ago, how shall we do so when we see him again?"

"Your question is sensible; it is easy to follow the spoor (trail) of the animal, but, as you have seen for yourself, we can do nothing while the circumstances remain as they are; we shall have to have the help of another elephant, who learned her business long since; I have that elephant at home; she is Wahrida; my father gave her to me when I took a wife; she is a jewel and knows more than any other creature in India; I have used her in capturing over a hundred elephants; she is sly and I think likes the fun of helping me carry on my trade; I have been offered large sums for her, but nothing can buy her; she loves me as you love your parents, and would give her life for me as I would give mine for her."

The swarthy countenance glowed. There could be no distrust of the fervent affection of the native for his sagacious animal.

"Then we shall have to go home to get her?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you bring her to Ayuthia that we might have ridden to the station on her?"

"Your good father did not think it best. You need not fret; you shall have plenty of chances to ride her and this foot-tramp through the jun-

gle, without the care of an animal, will be more of a comfort than if we had one."

"It certainly has been more lively," replied Dudley with a laugh.

The knowledge that, while they were following the spoor of the elephant they were also drawing near their own destination, was inspiring to the youth. Great as was the temptation to engage in the stirring experience of capturing the royal prize, it did not awaken such a profound yearning in the heart of Dudley Mayson as did that of meeting his own kin. Six years had passed since that memorable parting on the pier at New York. He thought of little Fannie and tried to picture her as a big girl, wearing long dresses, but until he actually saw his sister, he could think of her only as the sweet child, who clung to his neck, as if she would never let him go.

And then, with a pang of sadness, he reflected that the years of toil and self-sacrificing labour must have left their imprint upon his parents. The beautiful face of his mother had probably gained a wrinkle or two; perhaps a few silver threads were showing in the abundant auburn hair, and the frame may have lost some of its springiness. He remembered, as he would remember all through his life, the last time he

knelt at her knee, while with her hand resting on his head, he had murmured the prayer that had come from his lips and heart on every night since then.

And his father. He was in the prime of his vigorous young manhood, when, leaving all the comforts and allurements of civilization behind, he had gone forth to give his energies, his strength, his devotion and his love, to labour in that distant corner of his Master's vineyard. He never expected to return to his native land, although there was no saying when his splendid physical powers would succumb to the labours and insidious anxieties of his new life. Dudley wondered whether his father had grown stronger, or weaker, or whether mayhap he had held his own. Without inquiring directly of Nughwa, he asked many questions, whose answers served to enlighten him.

The son's eye kindled when the native told him in his naïve way that, among all the converts, there was not one who had the strength of the good missionary; he often engaged in foot races with them and none could equal him in speed; Siam had many wrestlers in whom she felt pride. Knowing how strongly physical superiority appeals to the barbarian, George Mayson had in a friendly way accepted the

challenges of the most famous wrestlers among the settlements for many miles around, and thus far he was a victor in all.

“One day,” said Nughwa, “a wrestler came all the way from Ayuthia to gain the glory of defeating the good missionary; news of your father’s skill had been carried to the town, and the native wrestler had been taunted and told that if he came to the station he would meet his master. The taunts made Wugo-Singh very angry, and he uttered a vow that he would throw the white man over his head and make him strike so hard on the earth that he would never be able to wrestle again.

“Well he came to Wahta-Shat with three companions who were wrestlers, but Wugo-Singh had defeated them all. He brought them along that they might witness his triumph, and tell, even as far as Bangkok, that there was none in all Siam who could lay Wugo-Singh on his back.

“Your father did not like such contests,—that is with those who came from a distance. He was willing to strive with his friends, but was not pleased that the people should think of him as a wrestler, rather than as one who wished to do good to their souls.”

“That was just like father,” said Dudley;

“I was told he was one of the most modest men in college; but I am anxious to hear the rest of your story.”

“When the four wrestlers arrived, one of them was an old friend of mine; he was an elephant-catcher and we had hunted together. He was a strong man who gave Wugo-Singh a hard tussle, but he had to bow the knee to him. Wugo-Singh told him as a secret, soon after the four reached the station that he meant to kill the good missionary—”

“The scoundrel!” exclaimed Dudley.

“But wait; his plan was to do it in a fair wrestling bout; he said he knew of a trick, by which he would trifle with the missionary until he was off his guard, when he would suddenly apply a lock and throw your good father so high above his head that when he struck the earth, his neck would assuredly break. My friend secretly told this to your father.”

“How did father take it?”

“He was grieved to learn that anyone should wish to harm him, but,” chuckled Nughwa, “his eyes flashed, when he was told that Wugo-Singh had said that he would trifle with him and carry along the contest for awhile, so as not to deprive the spectators of their enjoyment. That would help, too, to throw the good missionary

off his guard and make his defeat the greater.

“Wugo-Singh was a man of mighty power, and had never met his equal in all Siam; he hated the good missionary, because he belonged to the race of British who oppressed Siam; but more than that, he hated him because he had dared to believe he was the equal of Wugo-Singh in a wrestling bout; he did not care for the religion he taught, for Wugo-Singh was a Buddhist, and despised the faith of the white man. So great was his prowess, that the friend to whom he told his intentions was alarmed for your father. He tried to dissuade Wugo-Singh from his fell purpose, saying that it would be triumph enough for him to overthrow the missionary without doing him harm. He begged Wugo-Singh to do no more. In truth, he begged so hard that Wugo-Singh said he would not kill his antagonist, if the missionary would confess that Wugo-Singh was the better man.”

“Do you mean that father should agree to that *before* the wrestling bout?”

“That was what Wugo-Singh said.”

“You need not tell me what father said to that impudent demand; I don't understand why that wrestler of yours should ask such a confession, when he was so confident of his superi-

ority; surely he could well afford to wait until he proved he was a better wrestler than the white man."

"I did not make my meaning quite clear. Wugo-Singh did not mean that your father should confess he was not the equal of the native in skill, and have Wugo-Singh accept that as his victory without any wrestling contest. Wugo-Singh would not have omitted that for anything in the world."

"What then was he driving at?"

"He insisted that your good father should say to him in the presence of the three wrestlers, that he was not worthy to contest with him, but he would do so that the people who had come so far, besides those at the station, should not lose their entertainment. If the missionary would say this privately you understand, then Wugo-Singh gave his promise that he would not hurl the white man too hard to the earth. To quote his own words he would leave the good missionary enough strength to rise to his feet without help from his friends."

"And those words were told to father! How did he receive them?"

"His eye flashed. 'Go right back to Wugo-Singh,' said he, 'and tell him I will not make any such confession; tell him he is not a great

wrestler; he thinks he is, but I shall show all who look upon us that he is but a child in my hands; tell him that if I choose I can break his neck, but out of pity for him I will not do so; I defy him to do his best or worst, as you choose to consider it.' ”

Dudley Mayson's eyes sparkled.

“That sounds like father—God bless him! I wish I could have been there to see the match; wouldn't I have whooped it up for him! But go on.”

“In front of the little bamboo church that has been put up by the good missionary and his converts is a broad, open space. Sometimes when the weather is very warm, we gather there and the good man addresses us in the open air. We have had all our wrestling matches in that place. When the time came, not a man, woman, boy or girl was absent. They gathered with breathless interest, but most of them were sad, for it grieved them to believe they were about to see their loved missionary overthrown and perhaps killed.

“Wugo-Singh was bare to the girdle at his waist. He was not large, but his arms and legs were as of iron. He sneered when he looked on the graceful figure of the white man, who removed his coat and vest but wore his shirt.

When, however, Wugo-Singh had the chance to gripe the arms of the missionary, he was astonished to find the muscles were as hard as his own, but his confidence of victory was not weakened.

“I cannot describe all the contest. Wugo-Singh knew his business and perhaps it was well that the good man had been warned, for it saved him from holding the other too cheap. I think your good father was a little angry because of the slurs and taunts of Wugo-Singh, and he was not forbearing with him. Be that as it may, they had not struggled long, when Wugo-Singh was hurled upward, as if from a springboard and, describing a circle over the missionary’s head, he came down on his crown with a force that caused every one to gasp, for they were sure he was killed.

“He drew close to death, for it was some minutes before he was seen to breathe. You know your father is a physician, besides being a preacher. He was very kind, and nursed Wugo-Singh so carefully that after a time he came round, but it was several days before he was fully right.”

“Did he show any anger toward father for what he had done?”

“It was the other way; he formed a strong

love for him; he asked him about the religion he had brought from the other side of the world; he listened and after a time, knelt down and prayed to the same God and He heard him as He does all who pray to Him with the right spirit."

"So Wugo-Singh became a Christian?"

"Yes; he is a humble follower of the Saviour."

"You have interested me very much in your story; I wish I could meet Wugo-Singh."

"You shall meet him."

"You told me he came from Ayuthia; why did you not let me see him there?"

"You did."

"You are mistaken; I have no recollection of anything of that kind."

"I forgot to say that when Wugo-Singh became a Christian, he changed his name, like Saul of Tarsus."

"Ah, may I ask what it is now?"

"It is Nughwa."

CHAPTER X

THE SPOOR

“WHAT is the distance we must pass to reach home?” asked Dudley Mayson.

“About thirty miles.”

“And I suppose the forest continues the same as that through which we have passed?”

“You find little difference in the jungles of Siam, except where they are of less extent; even then a young man like you would be unable to see any change.”

“Of course we shall have to spend this night on the road, but we ought to reach home by tomorrow.”

“We shall do so, unless something unusual happens.”

“Like another tornado.”

“Such things are liable to come any time; we may journey to and fro for weeks without running into one, and then we may have two or three in as many days.”

“I got enough with the last one,—that will suffice, but, Nughwa (I don’t suppose you care for the old name ‘Wugo-Singh’), suppose the trail of the white elephant takes a new turn.”

“Probably it will, for it would be too good fortune for us if it kept on to Wahta-Shat. No,” he corrected himself, “it would be ill-fortune.”

“Why?”

“He would be discovered by others and they would capture him from us. True, they would not have so good a chance as I, for there is only one Wahrida. So, if the spoor changes, we must keep on to the station, which we ought to reach by to-morrow evening.”

“Why is it the white elephant is alone?”

“That is rather curious, but I think his friends are not far off and he will join them pretty soon.”

“And we shall have several instead of one to follow.”

“Yes; and it will be better that it is so.”

“It seems to me the task will be harder for us or rather for you.”

“Why does it seem so to you?”

“I have read that elephants are clannish and will fight for one another.”

“So they will, but I can shoot the others if

they become bothersome; in doing that, we shall distract their attention and our work will be easier."

Nughwa showed no desire for food, and Dudley Mayson had eaten enough mangosteen to serve him for the remainder of the day, so it did not seem there would be any cause for stopping before night.

The air grew sultry and oppressive. The youth, unaccustomed to such trying temperature, felt it more than his companion suspected, but he pluckily kept to work, with compressed lips, determined not to succumb until compelled to do so.

The largest of quadrupeds cannot help leaving a distinct spoor or trail, so it was no task for the two to follow the white elephant without any abatement of speed. The two had gone perhaps three miles, when Nughwa, who maintained his place slightly in advance, halted and asked his young friend to come to his side. Pointing to the ground, he asked:

"Do you notice anything different in the spoor?"

Dudley scrutinized the broken twigs and trampled undergrowth, but noted nothing except that the brute seemed to be advancing more carelessly, as may be said. When Dudley re-

marked this, his guide smiled, and without speaking, moved on again. Only a few rods away, the trail dipped slightly and crossed a rivulet. Here the ground was so soft that the huge, odd-looking footprints could be seen with great distinctness.

“Now look,” said Nughwa, stepping to one side so as to give the other a better opportunity to inspect the signs. A few moments were enough, and his young friend exclaimed:

“There’s more than one elephant in front of us.”

“How many do you make?”

Studying the impressions more closely, the lad replied:

“I make three.”

“That is right; instead of following the white elephant alone, we are following him and two companions; he has joined his family, as I was sure he would do.”

“But what induced him to wander off alone, as when we met him?”

“Do you not sometimes take a walk by yourself?”

The explanation contained in the question was hardly satisfactory, but Dudley did not think it worth while to press it further.

Hardly ten minutes passed in which they did

not hear the chattering of monkeys, and frequently the mischievous creatures were seen leaping, swinging and playing among the upper branches of the trees. Who can look upon those frolicsome animals without being amused? Dudley Mayson had stood with other boys in front of the cages in the museums at home, laughing at their antics, and he found those in the jungle so entertaining that he often stopped to watch them.

One gray-bearded old fellow seemed to feel particular interest in the young American. Perhaps he saw something in the lighter hue of his face and his different dress, which stirred his curiosity, for he hopped like a squirrel from limb to limb and kept abreast of him for a considerable way. He would peep around the side of a trunk, then scramble nimbly to a higher perch and peer down at the lad, all the time chattering and indulging in such grimaces that our young friend was forced to laugh outright. He half expected to see him put his thumb—if it may be so considered—to the tip of his sunken nose and twiddle his fingers at him.

It was not long after this that Nughwa made the discovery that the white elephant and his companions had turned abruptly to the northward.

“It is fortunate that such animals can’t help leaving a plain spoor, so that we are always sure of the right path to follow,” he remarked, as he turned off from the course they had been pursuing.

“How far are they likely to go before they stop?”

“There’s no saying,—that’s the worst of it. The elephant is a queer creature, and one of the most curious things about him is his way of learning when danger is drawing near. He has more knowledge and cunning than all the other brutes together. When a hunter comes upon one, the animal will start off through the jungle, crushing down everything in his path. He will tear his way ahead until hidden in the timber, when the racket may stop like a flash and everything become as still as the grave. The hunter thinks his game is hiding and spends an hour in stealing up to the spot, sure all the time that he has him beyond possibility of escape. Instead of that, the elephant has never stopped traveling and most likely is several miles away. The strange part of the business is the way he will suddenly cease his clatter, and just at the right time to make the man believe he is trying to hide himself. You will understand his purpose in making the racket and then stopping it, and

it is a wise hunter who does not find himself outwitted at the moment he is sure of his game. It is truly wonderful how he can move that enormous bulk so quietly, and if it were not for the moist atmosphere which keeps twigs and leaves soft, it would be impossible.”

CHAPTER XI

DOWN IN THE MOUTH

THE elephant spoor again turned to the right, leading directly toward the missionary station of Wahta-Shat, much to the delight of Dudley Mayson, who had recovered his physical buoyancy, because of the rest obtained a short time before. Less than half a mile farther, they reached the stream into which the tornado had carried the young American earlier in the day, though of course they were much farther to the eastward.

The footprints of the bulky creatures were easy to follow, and led along the bank of the tributary, for another mile, when they entered the water.

“What do you make of that?” asked Nughwa of his young friend, whom he seemed anxious to instruct in the mysteries of the jungle.

“It looks as if they had gone into the stream to bathe; I understand elephants are fond of bathing.”

“No animal is fonder, but, if that was their purpose they ought to be in sight; do you see anything of them?”

Dudley had already scrutinized the current, which, because of its windings, could not be traced to any distance with the eye. So far as he could judge, it showed no signs of the big animals.

“Can they not have wandered up or down stream?”

“They could, but they didn’t; they passed to the other side, and we must look for their spoor on that bank.”

“It will be no easy task to cross.”

“It is not difficult; I have done it many times; could we not make use of that log, lying against the shore, just above you?”

A glance at the object showed Dudley it was the same kind of log that he had tried to make use of earlier in the day. This crocodile, which was fully as large as the other, lay close to land, his body in the water and only his cavernous head above the surface, ready to gulp down anything that wandered within reach.

“Wait here a little while,” added Nughwa, “and you will see some fun.”

The cause of this remark was a number of apes or tailless monkeys, that were frolicking

among the trees along shore. Dudley believed they were meditating mischief against him and Nughwa, but the latter assured him the saurian would be the first one to receive attention from them. Such proved to be the fact.

The resemblance of the simian family, in more than one respect, to the human species is often startling. The group numbered eight or ten, and they could be seen consulting together, their actions and manner showing that their interest was in the crocodile. They chattered, looked wise, and one or two indicated the huge saurian by amusing gestures.

Suddenly the largest of the party ambled toward the monstrous head, and made a feint with his paw. This was repeated several times, and then the ape struck the corrugated mass a sharp blow and leaped nimbly back. The crocodile did not stir nor give any sign that he was aware of the movement.

The other apes viewed the sport of their leader with envy. It was too risky for them to imitate him, but they hit upon an expedient that promised the very sport they were seeking. They crowded together, scrambled oddly for a few minutes, and then evolved a chain, by hanging to one another's bodies, in the most grotesque fashion. One of them ran up an over-

hanging tree and grasped a projecting branch. A second clung to his lower limbs, a third to the second, and so on. The string was completed by the large ape leaping upward and seizing the lowest link.

“That fellow at the top has a big weight to support,” remarked Dudley; “they are a good deal stronger than I supposed. It looks as if the leader is to have all the fun to himself.”

“Wait till you see the end of the performance,” answered Nughwa.

The chain now began oscillating like a pendulum. The big monkey at the base helped matters by regularly striking his feet against the trunk of the tree. With a quick pressure, he sent himself swinging back, the amplitude of the vibrations increasing with each effort. As the leader whizzed over the head of the crocodile, he hung by one paw, and, reaching downward, flipped the craggy head with the other, uttering at the same time his peculiar cry of delight. The others showed their keen sense of the sport by joining in his expressions of pleasure.

This occurred several times, and then, as the bottom fellow was almost over the head, the immense jaws opened and viciously snapped. But they closed on vacancy. The ape eluded him, as a fly escapes the slap of a boy's hand,

and all the monkeys screamed with enjoyment. The disappointed reptile subsided and lay sullen and as motionless as a log.

The animated pendulum swung to and fro, the links frequently shifting their manner of supporting one another, until it looked as if the whole chain was going to pieces. Sometimes the apes changed positions and the one near the top dropped lower or deftly slid almost to the bottom. He would have changed places with the leader, had the latter permitted. This curious shifting about suggested the "Chinese chain," which looks as if falling apart, but does not do so, the deception being visual.

Meanwhile, the saurian bided his time. If he seemed asleep or indifferent, he was far from being so. The flat, ridged head, covered with scraggly knobs like the outside of a bank safe, gave no evidence of life, and the dull ugly eyes seemed to see nothing.

The dangling simiadæ were overflowing with boisterous fun. They chattered as they grasped the supporting limb or bodies, and the oscillations grew until it looked as if the lowest fellow, in case he lost his hold, would be carried by his momentum up among the limbs of the adjoining trees. You have seen a youngster grasp the end of a low-hanging branch, and thus swing

back and forth. Picture nearly a dozen boys thus clinging to one another and swaying to and fro, and you will have an idea of the chain of apes having their sport in the Siamese jungle.

Every time the string whizzed over the crocodile, the big fellow at the base leaned down and whacked the ugly head with one of his paws. Now and then he varied it by giving it a kick, and never failed to chatter and scream with enjoyment, as did his companions above, who coveted the fun that fell mainly to their leader.

“If that crocodile had a grain of sense, he would stop that business in a twinkling,” said the grinning Dudley Mayson.

“How would he do it?”

“The line has a regular swing, like a pendulum, and he must see it as it comes toward him. He can tell the exact instant when it will pass over his head, and a slight thrusting forward of his snout and a snap of the jaws would give him a dinner and his revenge, which I suppose he values more than everything else.”

“And that is just what he will do.”

The words were hardly uttered when they were verified. Just as the lowermost ape was rushing down the arc, the crocodile threw his head forward and upward and opened his enor-



Flipped the crocodile's craggy head with his paw.

mous jaws. The trap was ready, and yawned in the path of the approaching victim.

The ape saw his peril and desperately attempted to scramble up out of reach. He might have succeeded, had a few more precious seconds been his, but unfortunately, they were not. When the jaws snapped together, the monkey was in them, and he had only time to emit a hurried farewell, when he vanished from the sight of his companions.

The startling occurrence threw the remaining monkeys into consternation. They broke apart, tumbling to the ground beyond reach of the saurian and scattering among the branches, from which they looked down with cries of terror upon the creature that had deprived them with such suddenness of their leader. He looked blinkingly upward as if to signify his appetite was not quite satisfied and he was waiting for another titbit.

“I don’t think the survivors will repeat *that* performance,” said Dudley Mayson.

“Perhaps not for two or three days, when, if the chance offers, they will be at it again. Monkeys are like boys,—they are so full of mischief and fun, that they will take all sorts of chances. But the afternoon is passing, and we must not waste any more time.”

In truth, twilight was already stealing through the forest. It was not advisable to journey much farther.

“I was pretty well tired out awhile ago, when it was so warm,” said Dudley; “but with the going down of the sun, it seems to be cooler among the trees, and I am ready to walk as far as you wish, even when it is dark.”

“If there was need of doing so, we should keep it up, but we need not hurry to be at your home before dark to-morrow.”

“Just to think! I shall soon be with father and mother and Fannie, whom I have not seen for six years!”

“We have reason to think that will be so,” replied the native sympathetically, for he liked the sturdy American youth. He would have felt an attraction toward him for no other reason than that he was the son of the couple whom he loved and revered above all others in the world; but personal courage commands the admiration of everyone, and, brief as was the time the two had been together, the native had learned the sterling qualities of the youth who had come to Siam from the other side of the world.

“Have you any place in mind for our camp?” asked Dudley.

“Yes; there is a spot not far up the stream, where I have spent the night many times, when hunting or going to Ayuthia. It hasn’t any real advantage over any other spot, except that I am better acquainted with it. But it is on the other side of this stream.”

“How shall we get to it?”

“By crossing the water,” was the not very satisfactory reply. Then, seeing he had not been explicit, Nughwa added:

“There is more than one way of reaching the other side. The stream is not broad and we can swim, even with our guns. If you do not like to do that, we can make a raft and pole across, or we can go farther up the bank and wade.”

Now there are few things more tempting to a rugged, healthy boy than a swim on a sultry day in summer, but, in the present circumstances, it had disadvantages. The wetting of Dudley’s garments was of no concern, but the carrying of his weapon was. So he said:

“We have so much material at hand, let’s make a raft; the stream is narrow and it won’t be hard to pole across.”

“Your plan is the best one; we will do as you say.”

Laying aside their weapons, the two began

gathering the wood necessary to buoy them up in the water. Cautioning the youth not to mistake a crocodile for a prostrate tree—as he had once done—Nughwa passed up the bank a little way and called for his help in rolling a goodly sized trunk down the bank. This was floated for some rods when they came to another of smaller size. Then the native, with his keen-edged knife cut a number of running vines, which were used to secure the two floats side by side. He said the stream was no more than ten or twelve feet deep in the channel and it was easy for him to secure and trim a sapling of the required length. Carefully seating himself upon the raft, gun in hand, Dudley Mayson left the management of the float to his companion.

The current carried them a few rods down stream, while the guide pressed the end of the pole against the muddy bottom. The width of the tributary was about a hundred yards and half of it had been passed, when Dudley uttered an exclamation:

“Look! there are the elephants!”

Nughwa had seen the animals before him, and did not stop poling.

“They are not the ones we are looking for.”

From the jungle almost opposite issued four of the bulky creatures. They did not seem to

notice the raft with its two occupants, though it would seem that it ought to have interested them at once, but waded out into the stream, as if they intended to cross to the side which our friends had just left.

“They are not afraid of us,” said Dudley, “I wonder if they will attack.”

“They will give us notice if they do; we won’t disturb them if they leave us alone.”

The native ceased poling, in order that the two might drift below the point where the elephants had come into the water. While those animals sometimes give no heed to a hunter, unless he shows a desire to harm them, they are apt to resent any interference on the part of strangers. It cannot be said that Nughwa held them in any special fear, for he had captured or slain too many of their species, but he viewed the companionship of the young American as an element of weakness, and the circumstances were such that he meant to avoid a collision with the herd, if it could be done.

CHAPTER XII

GIANTS AT PLAY

THE four elephants entered the stream and waded out for two or three rods, when they had sunk deep enough in the water for it to reach their brown, bulky bodies. Then the fun began.

Sucking up the fluid in their trunks, they squirted it not only over themselves, but over one another. The performance resembled that of a number of sportive firemen, playing with several lines of hose. The streams sometimes struck an animal broadside, splashing and spraying in all directions; then one of them would receive it in his face; and, blinking and blinded for the moment, would retaliate by bombarding the comrade who was teasing him.

Nughwa and Dudley Mayson allowed their float to drift far enough with the current to take them out of range of the watery battle, which might have become anything but comfortable. The native wondered that the animals did not charge upon them.

“If they do,” he quietly said, “leave them to me.”

“But what shall I do?”

“Look on and see the fun *I’ll* have; if they persist, I will shoot the first, and then take your gun and shoot the second.”

“That will leave two and both our guns be empty.”

“Probably it will make the others flee; I think the shooting of the first will scare the others away.”

“But, if it does not?”

“Then we must hurry and load again; if we do not lag, we shall have time, and with two rifles, we can take care of the same number of elephants; these are not very large, but they may be savage.”

Nughwa began using the pole, and gradually working the raft toward land. Finally, he touched shore about a hundred yards below the group that were having so much sport in the water. They still acted as if they saw nothing of the man and boy, though of course it was impossible that they should be ignorant of their presence. The huge creatures enjoyed their bath. There could be no mistake about that, for they frequently trumpeted, not with anger, as is generally the case, but with pleasure. The

water was churned into a muddy mixture by their tramping to and fro, and the hose worked without cessation, splashing against the massive sides, on the huge fronts, and sometimes curving far over in the air and striking the surface rods distant.

The picture was so ludicrous, that after the two had stepped out on the bank, they paused to watch it. The danger here was less than when afloat, for they had space in which to move about and fight the elephants, should it become necessary. Even Dudley felt able to dodge them until he could bring his gun into play a second time.

A few minutes after their landing, they were surprised to see a fifth elephant issue from the jungle, hurry out in the stream and join the others. This fellow was only about half grown and was the embodiment of mischief itself. He was like a colossal pup whose spirits run away with him, and who could no more restrain his propensities than he could stop his own breathing.

The first thing he did was to seize the wiggling tail of the biggest animal and give it a wrenching yank that caused the owner to swing around with an angry grunt and make for the impertinent youngster. The latter was pre-

pared, lurched out of the way and sent a stream of muddy water, as if shot from a steam hose, squarely into the eyes of the larger one, who was so bewildered that he stopped, flung up his head to lift his eyes out of range, and waited for the chance to charge the impudent youth.

The latter splashed a few paces, grasped the nearest tail and gave it a tug that must have loosened the roots. The indignant victim reared on his hind feet, and using them as a pivot whirled round to punish the intruder. The size of the latter gave him an advantage, for he was nimbler, and could plunge here and there, as a more active boy eludes the efforts of his playmates to run him down.

You know the elephant is one of the most intelligent animals in the world. The little fellow, having involved himself with the two largest members of the herd, confined his attentions for the time to them. He knew it would not do to have the four form a syndicate to crush him, for they would be sure to do it with a vigour that would leave him no recourse except to retreat ignominiously.

Nothing could have pleased the two elephants more than to have the sport go on as it had begun. They liked to witness the pestering of their companions, and, so long as they them-

selves were not disturbed, they would encourage the fun as best they could. So they ceased playing the hose and calmly looked on.

The youngster found as it was that he had his hands full. The big fellows plunged and lurched after him, both dashing streams at his eyes and compelling him to do the liveliest kind of dodging to escape disaster. His agility was remarkable, for though hindered by the water on all sides, he was here, there, and anywhere, now and then eluding the two with astonishing celerity. Not always did he succeed. The biggest of all, whom he had first rashly attacked, managed to thrust his tusks under the body of his tormenter and roll him over as if he were a huge log. He would have half-drowned the youngster, had not one of the spectators interfered at the critical moment. He "butted in" with such vigour that the assailant of the youth was compelled to desist just as he had his victim at his mercy, and the large one was about to reinforce him. A minute more and the two would have made the youngster pay dearly for his ill manners.

The interference of the couple that had been looking on, however, changed in a twinkling the aspect of the situation. The active ones had to desist and unite against the assault of the

two who ought to have kept out of the row. Quick to see his advantage, the little fellow recovered his feet, and ploughed off to a safe distance, alert for an opening into which he could plunge, for his temporary overthrow had not frightened him in the least, but rather whetted his appetite for mischief.

Now, ingratitude is among the basest of crimes, and you would think that the young elephant would have felt nothing but thankfulness for the friend who had put in his oar when the youngster was in such sore need of help. In truth, he should have shown this gratitude to both, for he could not but be aware of what they had done for him. It would hardly do to say that he was lacking in such feeling, but, if so, he took a queer way of showing it. None the less, he was the victim of his own irrestrainable love for fun.

He filled his trunk as full of water as it could hold. Not only that, but he thrust the end down into the mud as far as he could and still work it. Thus, when he drew it up, it was loaded with a fluid that contained as much black sediment as water. Then approaching as near as he dared to the disputing elephants, he made ready to fire.

The one who had driven the leader away from

his assault on the youth noticed the action, and backed off several paces in order to enjoy the treat that was at hand. He saw the youngster raise his trunk, aim carefully and then eject the muddy stuff with all the force he could command.

But at the instant of doing so, he diverted the aim, and plastered the eyes and forehead of the spectator with the compound, the shock almost driving him over on his haunches. To think of the little fellow doing this to the one that had just proved himself his friend! Was ever such an outrage known?

Dudley Mayson roared. Even Nughwa, who like him, was watching the frisky youth, shook with merriment. It was one of the funniest things he had ever witnessed, and stamped the young elephant as a humorist of the first class.

None the less, he ought to have been ashamed of himself, for it was a mean return for favours received. As if to complete the record of baseness, the youth let fly with another roily charge at the front of the second one that had befriended him. Thus he had insulted the two that had come to his relief when driven to the wall.

It would have served these right if the other couple, that had been pestered by the youngster

from the first, had joined him in tormenting the verdant ones. Perhaps they would have done so, had they not known he could not be trusted. Any young elephant who would act as he had just acted could not be depended upon, except to do the wrong thing, and they did not mean to give him a chance to do that.

Wrongdoing rarely goes unpunished. The baseness of the sportive youngster instead of holding his enemies divided, brought them together, and the whole four now charged upon him. No one could help admiring the nimbleness and skill with which he defended himself for a time; but the combination was too strong. He was pressed so hard that he was compelled to give ground or rather water. He swam, dived, threshed and plunged to and fro, but the attacks were incessant and he was not given time to rally or pull himself together. Four streams of animal hose converged at the same moment upon his head and eyes. He ducked under the surface to get out of the way, but he could not stay long, and, when his head reappeared, you would have thought it was a brick wall which a party of firemen were trying to beat down, as they sometimes do, by playing several streams against it.

It did not take the young fellow long to com-

prehend that he had made a blunder. If I may be permitted to use a slang expression, he was "up against it," with a vengeance. He could not get out of the trap any too soon. He must either swim for the farther shore, or take refuge on the one he had just left. After a moment's indecision, he concluded to try the latter, for that was nearer at hand.

He was too wise to attempt to make his way through the party that barred his path, for that would have been walking directly into the trap from which he just freed himself. So he began swimming, with his trunk pointed toward the most distant bank. The four did not care to pursue him, for bathing was more pleasant. They withdrew their attention from the tormentor, of whom they were glad to be rid, and resumed their sport among themselves.

But, as I have said, the young fellow did not mean to cross the stream. As soon as he perceived that attention was withdrawn from him, he turned down the current, making a wide circuit and finally heading for land again. The manœuvre brought him quite close to Nughwa and Dudley Mayson, who never in all their lives enjoyed anything more. At the suggestion of the native, they moved back a few paces, in order not to alarm the fellow, toward whom they

naturally felt a strong liking. There was something so human in what he had done, that he was drawn near to them.

Nughwa who knew so much about the *Elephas Indicus*, was surprised that the young one, now that he was brought so near them, acted as if he had not the remotest knowledge of their proximity. He emerged from the stream, with the water dripping from his rugged hide, and then, with an innocent expression or rather manner, tramped into the jungle and passed from view.

“He acts as if he has had enough of the big fellows,” said Dudley, in an undertone.

“Not by any means; that isn’t the last of him; he is figuring out some new trick, and it won’t be long before he springs it on them. That fellow will be nothing but a bundle of mischief until he gets his full growth and is sobered by age.

“It won’t be dark for some time, Nughwa; let’s wait and see more of the performance.”

The native was quite willing, especially because he had formed a belief concerning the brute that had just vanished, of which he took care not to hint to the youth. Standing farther up stream than Dudley, he took care to hold his attention so that he did not glance to the rear,—that is down stream. He was not likely to do

so anyway, since the bathing elephants were in the opposite direction.

Thus it was that by and by Nughwa caught sight of a dark body moving through the undergrowth. It was the young elephant, who advanced absolutely without noise. Coming to the shore of the stream, he again filled his trunk with muddy water. Then Nughwa saw through the foliage the head of the creature turned toward him. He appeared to be standing still, but as the leaves kept noiselessly moving from the front of his head, it was evident he was stealing closer to the couple. Young as he was, he had learned that strange craft which enables his kind to move through the jungles as silently as an Indian scout reconnoitering a hostile camp.

Nughwa immediately devoted himself to engaging the whole attention of his young friend. He was sure from the frequent glances the four adults cast at the wood that they were expecting the coming of the young nuisance and a renewal of his annoyances. Dudley did not take his attention from the herd for a single moment.

Meanwhile, Nughwa could not restrain his delight over what was coming. He saw the young elephant stealing forward until he stood within ten feet of the lad, who had never a thought

that he was anywhere near him. The animal paused. He had reached the right point for making a bull's eye.

"What pleases you so much?" asked the wondering Dudley; "you seem hardly able to stand."

"Did you ever see anything so funny as that youngster? He got the better of the older ones and they are sure to hear from him again; pretty soon you will laugh—"

At that instant, the mischievous subject of these remarks, let fly. He drove the stream with such force that it shot out almost horizontally, but, instead of landing on the neck and head of the lad, it missed him by a foot and struck the unsuspecting Nughwa full in the face and open mouth, sending him over on his back, with his heels kicking the air.

Dudley Mayson was avenged.

CHAPTER XIII

NIGHT IN THE JUNGLE

SUCH an experienced hunter as Nughwa ought to have looked out for the liquid cannon shot. He had seen only a short time before, a similar trick performed by the young elephant upon his older companions, but he never dreamed of anything of the kind, until he received the tremendous bolt fair and square.

The startled Dudley looked behind him. The mischief-maker had exhausted his supply of ammunition, and, wheeling about, plunged through the jungle, without any effort to move silently. He had had his fun and was ready to join his companions by a roundabout course. Then, as the youth turned his gaze, and saw his friend climbing to his feet, blinking, gasping and wiping the muddy water from his countenance, he understood all that had taken place.

And then didn't Dudley laugh? He staggered about and finally sank to the ground overcome with merriment. Nughwa did his best to join him in his mirth, but it was hard.

“You saw him sneaking up behind me, eh? You kept my attention on the others, so as to prevent my looking around; you thought he meant to dowse *me*, and instead of that, he let you have it right in your grinning face. Oh, how I love that young fellow; I’d like to throw my arms around his trunk and embrace him.”

“I wish you would try it,” growled Nughwa.

There was no ill-nature, however, about the guide, even when the victim of such a joke as had just been played on him. He remarked that they had already wasted a good deal of time, and night was so near, that they ought to be moving on.

“All right; you are the leader; this has been a time of rare enjoyment, but, Nughwa, don’t travel too fast, please.”

“Why not?”

“When I think of the picture you made as you tumbled over on your back from that shot of the young elephant,—why, Nughwa, I am weak. How you would have laughed if *I* had served as the target instead of you?”

“I hope you will,” thought the native, though he did not speak the words.

When a little distance above the herd of elephants, the two paused for a minute or two, to see how the animals were getting on. The

four had grown tired of bathing and were crossing the stream. Near the middle, the depth forced them to swim for a short way, but soon their broad backs heaved up in sight, and they lumbered to the other shore.

“And I declare!” exclaimed Dudley; “that youngster is with them!”

Such was the fact. He was at the rear, and because of his less stature, had to swim a little farther than the others, before walking. The four accepted him as one of themselves and did not disturb him.

“I wonder they don’t punish him for his tricks,” said Dudley.

“I guess he must have told them of the fun he had with us—that is with *me*—and they don’t mind such a little affair as the one with them. You must remember, too, that they got the better of him and drove him ashore.”

“If only an elephant could laugh, those four would fall down and drown, when he described how he played it on you. Wait one minute, please, Nughwa, till I get my strength again.”

“I would walk faster than ever, if we hadn’t reached the place where we are to camp for the night,” replied the native, with an odd grimace at the youth, who certainly can be excused for his merriment.

By this time, it was so dark that in the shadow of the jungle, Dudley could make little use of his eyes. They had come to a small, natural clearing or opening, not more than a couple of rods in width, where there was no undergrowth, though the grass was exuberant, as it always is in a tropical forest. This had been tramped down by Nughwa himself, and he had gathered on his way out a pile of dried and green branches, sufficient to keep a blaze going for a number of hours. In fact, he explained that when on his way to Ayuthia, he had made these preparations in the expectation that he and his charge would spend the one night on the road at the place.

Neither cared to add anything in the way of food to the mangosteen eaten some hours before. Nughwa carried a rubber box of lucifer matches, with one of which he started the fire that soon cast a glow on the stream behind them, and revealed the dark outline of the opposite bank. The native drew forth his long-stemmed pipe of red clay, filled it with tobacco from his pouch, and, seated on the ground, sank into one of the reveries to which he was subject. Dudley had already noticed these moods, brief as was the time they had spent together, and he was curious to know the cause. Was it some inci-

dent that had lately occurred which gave him food for thought, or was it constitutional with him? He was tempted to question Nughwa, but decided that it would be better taste not to do so.

The two had been seated only a short time, when the youth observed a remarkable exhibition which he set out to investigate. Leaving his gun lying on the ground, within easy reach of the native, he walked the few steps necessary to the edge of the water, and looked up stream. That which he saw I believe is witnessed in no part of the world except Farther India. The jungle was alive with fireflies, or "lightning-bugs," as some call them in North America. The tiny points of light were twinkling everywhere, just as you have noticed many a time, but the remarkable sight which Dudley Mayson witnessed was this:

Every limb and leaf on a large tree would be covered with the insects with all as dark as midnight. Then, at the same instant, the myriads would unmask the lamps with which nature had provided them. It was as if innumerable tiny, electric bulbs were set aglow at the same instant by the pressing of a button. By and by, as if the thumb were removed, the myriads would be swallowed up in darkness again.

Imagine yourself standing on the bank of a stream flowing through the Siamese forest, and watching the picture. Suddenly a gigantic cone would flash out its thousands of fiery points, glow for a few minutes, and then give way to impenetrable gloom. Near by another tree would repeat the same exhibition. Above, below and across the stream, everywhere in the whole field of vision, scores and hundreds of trees of varying heights kept up this wonderful display for hours at a time.

Selecting a single tree, it would have seemed that the lighting was automatic, as I have described. It certainly was marvellous that the multitudes of insects should flash out so vividly, and then hide themselves in darkness at the same instant. These large fire-flies cluster only on certain kinds of vegetation, avoiding all others, and the exhibition which they give is one of the most remarkable sights of the tropical jungles.

Dudley Mayson stood watching the singularly beautiful picture until he grew weary, when he returned to the camp fire. It was so low that he flung several sticks on the blaze and seated himself opposite his friend, who was smoking, as if still sunk in a reverie. He was roused by the action of the lad.

“What were you looking at so long?” he asked.

“Those fire-flies; they are the most curious things I ever saw.”

Nughwa smiled. They were an old story to him.

“Your good father tells me he never saw such until he came to Siam.”

“I never heard of them before.”

“Many things must strike you as strange, as others would strike me, if I visited your country.”

“Yes; Nughwa, I do not hear anything of the birds of which we saw so many to-day.”

“Most of them are asleep, but the wild animals and creeping things are not; night seems to be the time when they love to hunt food and to fight with one another.”

“The fire must be a great protection?”

“It would not do to camp for the night without a fire; all wild animals hold it in such fear that it is one’s only safety.”

“It is too much for you to keep awake the night through to prevent the fire going out.”

“I do not intend to do that.”

“That is right; we will share the watch between us.”

“No; you *think* you could keep awake, but

you cannot. It reminds me of the time your good father and I went on a hunt in the jungle to the north of the station. He is a good hunter and has passed through many dangers, even in his own country. When the time came for camping, he insisted that he should be allowed to stand guard until past midnight, when he promised to awake me to take his place. I told him I was afraid he would fall asleep, and he asked me if I thought it possible, after he had shot a tiger during the afternoon and we were expecting to meet others.

“He insisted so hard that I agreed to divide the night as he wished. He carried a watch and assured me I should be awakened at one o’clock exactly, for you know the latter part of the night is harder than the first for one to keep awake.”

“Did you have any doubt of father?” asked Dudley with a smile.

“Well, I thought the chances were about even; it is easy enough for a man to keep awake when he is on his feet and walking all the time. Then he is able to fight off slumber, but it takes long experience for one to hold his eyes open while sitting on the ground. Not many can do so, though it has been easy for me, ever since I became an elephant-catcher. So I said

to myself, before closing my eyes, that I must open them again a little after midnight. Young as you are, you know you have only to fix on a certain minute for you to awake and you will do it."

"It works sometimes with me, but not always."

"Well, I opened my eyes at the time I had set and would have laughed had the situation not been so dangerous. Your father was sitting across the fire from me, his head bowed on his breast, and sound asleep. While I was asking myself whether I should awake him or let him continue to slumber, I heard a rustling a little to the right, and, looking there, caught the glitter of a pair of large eyes.

"Those eyes belonged to a great tiger, and he was waiting for the fire to sink a little lower before leaping out of the gloom upon your good father: that moment would have come within the next quarter of an hour."

"My gracious!" gasped Dudley, awed by the picture; "what a narrow escape!"

"It was, but no harm came to the good missionary. I couldn't have asked a better aim, and the bullet that I lodged between the eyes killed the tiger before he knew what hurt him. Certain that others of his kind were not far off,

I quickly stirred the fire and flung more wood on it. Your father could hardly believe he had fallen asleep, until he saw the proof. He reproached himself very much, but I told him he should not do so, for not one man in a hundred, when placed in his situation, would fail to do just as he had done. You may be sure he and I did little sleeping for the rest of the night."

"How are you going to manage it, Nughwa, when you dare not trust me and you say you mean to sleep a part of the time?"

"I will throw enough wood on the blaze to last two or three hours, and then wake up and throw on more; I will keep that up till the night is over; thus I will get all the sleep I need and also keep watch: what do you think of the plan?"

"It sounds well enough; you say you can wake whenever you wish, but it seems to me it is risky to have us both asleep at the same time, for some wild animals might steal closer than you think."

"I have tried the plan many times and it has never failed."

"Well, Nughwa, it is not for me to criticise one who knows more in five minutes about this part of the world than I shall know in my lifetime. I am sure I could keep awake for two or

three hours, for it will be that long before my regular time for retiring comes, but it remains for you to say. Of course I cannot be certain, but I still cannot see why a fellow couldn't keep awake if he really made up his mind to and kept thinking about it all the time."

CHAPTER XIV

THE SECOND MORNING IN THE JUNGLE

“I HAVE read that hunters in countries like this sometimes build a circle of fires and sleep in the centre of the ring.”

“So they do,” replied Nughwa, “but I believe that is more the custom in certain parts of Africa, where lions are so plentiful you meet them at every turn. I did it a few times when in the country of the Laos, but there is no need of it here.”

“I have seen pictures, too, of men sleeping in hammocks suspended in the trees.”

“I have done that many a time, and it isn’t a bad plan, for you can place yourself so far above the ground that not even a tiger can reach you by jumping, but I have not done it for more than a year, because of what befell me.”

“What was that?”

“Well, several bad things happened, enough to make any man feel uncomfortable. Once, after starting a good fire, I settled myself to

rest, and was just sinking into a doze, when I heard a growl which I knew the meaning of the instant it struck my ear. But the terrifying thing about that growl was that it did not come from the ground, but from the air. One of the biggest tigers India ever produced had come prowling around the camp and caught sight of the hammock in the glow of the firelight. He knew what was in it and he meant to have the man for his supper. So he squatted down and made the greatest jump of his life.

“I thought I was too high to be reached by such creatures, but that tiger came just a little too near. He bounded up in the air, and his head, at the top of the curve he made, must have swept only a foot or so below the lowest part of the hammock. As he whizzed past, he made a stroke at me with one of his paws. He ripped out a big piece of the hammock and tore off a part of my clothing and a big patch of skin.

“By the time that was done I was pretty wide awake. If I hadn’t been, I should have slipped through the hole in the hammock and right into the claws of the animal.”

“Did he trouble you any further?”

“No,” replied Nughwa with a smile, “nor anyone else; he gathered himself for another leap, but he rose only a few feet from the

ground, when he dropped back and stayed there."

"And that ended your sleeping in a hammock?"

"No; I tried it a few days later, taking care to hang the bed so high that no creature could jump to it."

"I should think they would climb the tree and attack you from above."

"Such things have been done, though it never happened to me. The worst experience I had was not many miles from this spot, and only a few weeks after my experience with the tiger. I was at a safe height in my hammock, when a monkey gnawed the rope at the head of my bed in two, and I turned two or three back somersaults on my way to the ground. I believe that fellow saw what a fine chance he had for some fun, and called about fifty other monkeys to enjoy the sight. I had kindled a fire and there was a full moon, so they all had a good view; when I struck the earth, they screeched with delight."

"You must have been hurt."

"I was pretty well shaken up, but my fall was broken by passing through the limbs on my way down. As it was, I suffered several weeks from a lame back."

“I don’t see that anyone is safe in this country, Nughwa.”

“Nor anywhere in the world,” said the guide reverently. “We are in the hands of God, and He does all things well. In His own good time He will take us to His home. I walk the woods as I walk through my own home—thinking no evil and yet ready to go whenever He chooses to call me to Him.”

A twinge of reproof went to the heart of Dudley Mayson that he should receive a rebuke from an Asiatic, born and educated in the false doctrine of Buddhism. He hastened to recall his complaining remark, and to express his regret that he had been thoughtless enough to make it.

It was yet comparatively early in the evening, and Nughwa resumed smoking his pipe, of which he was fond, while the lad, seated on the other side of the fire, looked into the dusky countenance, and listened to the words that he always found entertaining and often instructive.

Suddenly Dudley sprang to his feet and glanced behind him.

“What frightens you?” asked the native without rising, but looking keenly at him.

“Something is in the bushes there; I don’t

know whether it is an animal or some kind of reptile."

"I do," calmly remarked Nughwa; "come away and leave it to me."

From the fact that Nughwa had seized a stick instead of his rifle, Dudley thought the disturbing cause was not a quadruped. He stepped aside, wisely leaving the settlement of the matter to the veteran of the jungle. He assumed a crouching posture, his right hand extended with the stick and cautiously parting the undergrowth at the edge of the clearing, his appearance and pose indicating alertness.

The groping failed to reveal the intruder, and Nughwa backed away several paces and picked up a brand from the camp fire. Holding this above his head in his left hand, he slowly moved it to and fro, carefully drawing near the spot where the rustling had been heard. He did not go so far as before, but still crouching with his face thrust forward, continued to wave the torch to the right and left.

Suddenly the listening youth heard a soft hissing, and then the flat, triangular head of a serpent was thrust upward among the shrubbery. Before it could advance, as it doubtless intended to do, Nughwa made a cat-like leap forward and struck a blow with the stick that

was done so quickly that Dudley hardly caught the movement. The stroke was repeated with the same deftness, and then, inserting the stick beneath the reptile, Nughwa flung it several rods back among the trees, with the simple remark:

“It will bother us no more.”

“What sort of a reptile was it?” asked the wondering Dudley.

“A fire serpent. It is the only creature I know of that is attracted by fire; instead of keeping away from it, some attraction draws it toward the blaze.”

“What would that one have done if you had not killed it?”

“It would have crept into the open and gone as near the fire as the heat would allow.”

“It was directly behind me and would have had to pass me quite close.”

“*That* wouldn’t have given it any trouble,” was the significant remark of Nughwa; “it would have halted long enough on the way to bite your arm or leg or hand or face, and then glided on. As for you, that would have been the last of the son of the good missionary.”

“Ugh! what a horrible country; has it many fire serpents?”

“No; fortunately they are few. I remember

a party of three hunters who were picking their way through the jungle one night with torches, when they were so bothered by fire serpents that they had to put out their lights and go into camp."

"Did they not kindle a fire as we have done?"

"Yes, and were visited by more serpents, but it was easy to slay them as they glided forth, and by and by the stock gave out. But the night is passing, and it is well for you to sleep."

Dudley Mayson had passed through so many strange experiences during the day that he felt as if he could not close his eyes until safe within his own home; but he was wearied of body, and, sooner than would be supposed, he drifted into dreamland, and when he opened his eyes, the light of morning was stealing through the jungle.

The young American awoke in high spirits, for the blissful thought which first came to him was that if all went well, he would be with his loved ones before the setting of the day's sun.

"Six years since we saw each other," he repeated, as he had done many a time since sailing from the other side of the world; "won't they be glad to see me and won't *I* be glad to see *them*? God be with us all!" he reverently added, as he knelt in his morning's devotions.

Nughwa had been awake for a full hour. The fire had been allowed to die out, for there was no need of it in that sultry climate. Coffee, tea or chocolate was not among their necessities, though the lad would have been pleased to drink any one of them. The meals consisted wholly of fruit, of which, as you know, there is no end in the tropical forests.

The native had brought a number of mango-steens, bananas and durians. The last, he spoke of as the king of fruits, and yet, to the foreigner, its odour and taste at first are almost unbearable. This was the occasion when Dudley took one of the specimens in hand, but the instant he raised it to his lips, he was seized with such a nausea that he flung it from him, nor could he be persuaded for the time to touch it again. I may as well repeat, however, that it did not seem quite so horrible, when he tried it later in the day, and he had been in Siam less than a week, when he grew extravagantly fond of it, and such is the experience of most persons from other climes.

“The day will be warmer than yesterday,” said Nughwa, when each, gun in hand, resumed the journey toward the missionary station of Wahta-Shat.

“That isn’t the best prospect in the world, but I never felt stronger, and I am so eager to get home that you needn’t spare me. What about the trail of the elephants?”

“We shall follow that, and it continues in the right direction.”

This was fortunate, for the tropical depths are so dense and tangled with vines, creeping plants and enormous trees that it is often hard for a horse or man to force his way among them. There are many portions of the world, such as the depths of the Brazilian forests, and in the Andaman Islands, where explorers are able to make headway only by climbing from branch to branch a considerable distance above ground.

A broken road farther to the south connected Wahta-Shat and Ayuthia, and it had been traversed by Nughwa and the missionary on horseback, and once or twice with elephants, but the native preferred the course through the jungle, where he was able to keep to a certain trail, and was in no danger of losing his way. At the same time, he ran no risk of meeting strangers against whom he seemed to hold a prejudice, even when they belonged to his own race.

The exuberant foliage shut out the sun’s rays, which was fortunate for the younger traveller, since in an open plain the flaming heat would

have been of smiting intensity. Nughwa kept furtive watch of his companion, and long before midday, saw he was presuming too much on his strength.

“You are not used to this climate,” he gently said, slowing his pace; “after you have lived and hunted in Siam for a few months, you won’t mind it more than I.”

“It is rather trying, Nughwa, but the best way to get used to it is to keep going.”

“Not beyond what you can stand. Then you must remember there is no need of haste; what harm would it do to pass another night in the jungle?”

“Is there any probability of *that?*” sharply asked Dudley, glancing at the swarthy countenance, which was as devoid of expression as a wooden man’s.

“I hope not, but you know how uncertain everything is in this world; the distance to the station is so short that we ought to make it before dusk, even if we rest by the way, which we may as well do now.”

They had reached a small tributary of the stream which had served them for a part of the distance as guide. The water was not only clearer, but cooler, and the draught which Dudley Mayson gained by lying flat on his face,

after the manner of most American youths, was grateful and refreshing. His friend told him they would wait an hour or so, and the rest was welcome indeed to the youth, who stretched out on the soft grass, was feeling as if he could enjoy nothing more than to lie thus for the rest of the day.

So far on the second day in the jungle, they had seen nothing of elephants, tigers, boars, rhinoceroses, elks, deer or other animals, though they were liable to meet them at any time. They were more plentiful, however, in the Laos country to the north.

"I have made the journey from Wahta-Shat to Ayuthia and back again," said Nughwa, "without firing my rifle on the road."

"But you met some of the animals belonging to this part of the world?"

"Always, except once, when I did not see so much as an elephant; I crossed the spoor of several and just missed getting a shot at a tiger which I heard crashing through the jungle."

"Do you expect to be as fortunate to-day?"

"I don't know that we should call it fortunate to miss seeing any elephant; you know how much we are interested in *one* we saw yesterday."

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER CURIOSITY

STRETCHED out on the cool ground, with the delicious sensations of a lad who is thoroughly tired, Dudley Mayson watched the frolicsome monkeys, as they swung from limb to limb and chased one another through the treetops. A person can become accustomed to any sight, so that the scene which held him deeply interested at first, loses its absorbing charm, and he idly surveys it as he views the most ordinary incidents.

The young American had lain thus for nearly a half hour, when he suddenly sat up with an exclamation of astonishment.

“What is it?” asked his companion, who was reclining on the ground and smoking his pipe.

“Siam seems to be a land of contraries,” replied Dudley. “You have told me that in no other part of the world are white elephants found.”

“And I told you the truth, so far as I have been able to learn.”

“But you said nothing about white monkeys, like that one overhead.”

“Where?” asked Nughwa, removing the pipe from his mouth and looking up among the branches.

The youth pointed a little to the left at a limb some twenty feet above their heads, where the remarkable sight he had spoken of was to be seen. Perched on the limb, was one of the comical fellows, with a large green nut between his paws, blinking and looking down at the two strange-looking creatures below. He was rather small in size, and from pate to toe was of a milk white colour.

“Some animals become gray like persons, as they grow old,” said Dudley; “can that be the cause of that monkey’s strange colour?”

“No; age does not affect his kind in that way; that is the second one I have seen in my lifetime; he is not more than two or three years old.”

“He is such a curiosity that he must be valuable; I am sure that Barnum, our great showman, would pay a big price for him.”

“Why not catch this one then and send him to the showman you speak of?”

“I wish I could, but I fear it will be as hard

as for us to make the white elephant a prisoner. Which is thought of more highly?"

"The white elephant, but our king will pay a big price for every white monkey that is brought to him."

"Why does he place so much value upon them?"

"Because the creatures *deserve* it. They are called *paja*, and like the white elephant, have attendants and officers to look after their wants. You know the monkey is a man, though we cannot call him beautiful in appearance."

"I have heard him spoken of as our brother, but I find it hard to believe it."

"All the same, he *is* our brother."

In making this Darwinian assertion, Nughwa uttered the belief of the Siamese people, which he fully shared.

"If that is so, why does he not speak like the rest of us?"

"He has a very good reason; he fears that if he should talk, the king will compel him to work without pay."

"If that were so, they would speak to one another when in the depths of the jungle, where no one would report the fact to the king."

"Who knows but that they do?"

"If that were their practice, some person

would have discovered it, when the monkeys did not know they were within earshot; have you ever heard any of their words?"

"No, but I have been told by other hunters that they have overheard them speak."

"Don't you believe it, Nughwa; white seems to be a sacred colour with you."

"It is; when a talapoin meets a white cock, he salutes him, which is more honour than he pays to a prince of royal blood. My friend," added Nughwa, laying aside his pipe and slowly rising to his feet; "I think we have a chance of capturing that white monkey."

"I can't understand how that can be done, for you have no ropes with you, and no man can climb like one of those creatures. It seems to me, as I said, it will be harder than making a prisoner of the white elephant."

"Yes; it is hard, and if it is done, it must be through some trick; if that fails it will be easy to shoot him."

"Shoot him! Of what use is a dead monkey?"

"You mistake me; I would not kill the animal, but wound him so he could not get out of my way; then I would take him home and nurse him till he got well. He has not yet got his growth," added the native, scrutinizing the

creature, who still held his perch on the limb and stared down at the couple, as if he really knew they were talking about him; "so it would not take long for him to become well, that is if I hit him right."

"That would be cruel; I should much rather have him go free than have you cause him any hurt."

"I don't want to harm him, but I think I could manage to do it in the right way; you must remember, my good friend, that I am like the other Siamese."

"I know you are a Christian, but what do you mean by your words?"

"I am poor; I have a wife and two children, not old enough to earn money; most of the Siamese look upon me with dislike because I gave up Buddhism for the new and true religion."

"I am sure my father has taught you to be kind to animals as well as to men; I have been told that Buddhists will not kill any animal or reptile if it can be avoided."

"That is true and there is nothing good which your father has not taught us," replied Nughwa gratefully, "but I do not remember that he and I have ever talked about white monkeys."

"Because there was no reason for doing so;

he would be displeased, if he learned that you had fired your gun at this harmless creature, for no other purpose than to wound it into helplessness."

"You are sure of that?" asked the native with an anxious expression of countenance.

"As sure as that you are standing there."

"Then I shall not hurt the monkey," said Nughwa, with a glowing face; "I did not feel quite right, when the thought came to me, but now I *do* feel so, for I know you have spoken the truth."

"But you will try to capture the animal?"

"Of a surety; let us watch him for a few minutes."

Dudley now rose to his feet and stood beside his friend, both fixing their gaze upon the interesting fellow, who was still perched on the limb, vivaciously munching nothing, as his kind are fond of doing. He kept his grasp upon the big nut, as if it were a football, and he was watching a chance to make a touchdown. His playfellows had become so accustomed to his unique appearance, that they gave him no more attention than if his hue had been the same as their own.

No one can watch the antics of a party of monkeys, even for a few minutes, without seeing

something amusing. Probably some of the others did not like it because the white one remained motionless so long. They kept up their swinging, chattering and running to and fro, paying little heed to the one that was nursing the green nut. It was not long, however, before he caught the eye of a big fellow, that was shinning along a branch some feet above and behind the white one. He abruptly paused and peered down at him, as motionless for a minute or two as the limb on which he had halted.

“Watch the big fellow,” whispered Nughwa; “he is going to have some fun with the white one.”

While the native was speaking, the larger creature began stealthily letting himself down to a branch, only a little below the other. There he paused long enough to twist off a switch six or eight feet long, with a tuft of leaves at the extremity. Then he silently thrust it toward the white fellow.

The scene became highly laughable. The unsuspecting one sat down on the limb, as if it were an easy chair, and rested his back against the trunk, stretching out his legs, as if he had settled himself for an hour's nap. He still held the fruit and his appearance suggested that he was fondling a baby.

He was certainly interested in the man and boy standing below, for with that odd, grimacing champing of his jaws, he never once removed his twinkling black eyes from them. His actions seemed to say:

“Each of you is an odder looking monkey than I am: what do you think of *me?*”

Meanwhile, the big fellow was active. He shifted his position, so as to bring the trunk between him and the other, and then silently extended the branch in his hand. The tuft was hidden by the tree trunk for a minute or two, but by and by, our friends saw two or three leaves creeping around the farther side. Then one of them was wiggled against the silky, human-like ear of the other, who, mistaking it for a mosquito or some other insect, made a vicious slap at it. The big fellow deftly snatched back the branch and held it out of sight behind the trunk.

The grotesque face of the animal, wreathed in white, like an old gentleman from the country, was too much for Nughwa and Dudley Mayson. They shook with mirth, for the sight of a person slapping at an imaginary fly or mosquito is always funny, and neither had ever seen anything quite so comical as the sight before them.

You may be sure the tormenter kept busy.

As noiselessly as a shadow creeping over a dial, the bunch of leaves was thrust forward again, and stole around the trunk of the tree, against which the white monkey was leaning, with his head turned toward the spectators below, in whom his interest centred. Dudley was surprised that the amusing performance did not interest the other animals. They kept up their antics among themselves, not once giving heed to the couple upon which our friends had fixed their attention.

The big fellow was an artist in his way. The wiggling of the bunch of leaves against the ear was so gentle, that it perfectly imitated the action of a mosquito, when it alights and before it has got down to business. The monkey made a quick flirt of one paw, and glanced to his left, as he did so. The other was so quick in whisking away the branch that the younger discovered nothing. Whatever suspicions, therefore, might have been awakened were lulled. Once more he stared down at the man and boy, as if he had determined to see the end of the queer performance from his perch beyond their reach.

Who shall fathom the mysteries of the brain in an intelligent animal? It may have been that the boisterous mirth of the bipeds below

awakened a suspicion in the mind of the white monkey that some one was playing a trick on him; for, when he felt a tickling for the third time, he did not flirt his paw at it again, but leaning to one side peeped around the trunk.

The big fellow was not expecting such discovery, and was in the act of thrusting the branch forward again, when the funny white face came into sight beside the tree. While he was much larger and stronger than the other, he acted as if scared by his detection. With a cry of alarm—real or pretended—he dropped the branch and turned to flee. The other stood up on the limb, balancing himself with one paw against the trunk, and, taking quick aim, with the other hurled the big nut at his tormentor. The monkey is not an adept at such performances, but, to the astonishment of the spectators, he sent the fruit squarely against the big one's back. He was going on all fours at the moment along a big limb, when the impact knocked him off, and he went sprawling, clawing and clutching to the ground.

The fall of course did not hurt him, though he must have been jarred by the thump from the heavy nut. He looked up at the white one and chattered angrily, and the white one chattered back at him, as if daring him to repeat his at-

tempt, while only one or two of the others gave more than a passing notice to the wrangle.

“That was one of the funniest things I ever saw,” said Dudley Mayson, “it made me think of the long summer afternoons in our country school, when some of the boys found they could not keep awake. But so sure as one of them laid his head down on the desk, just so sure another boy, who was not drowsy, began tickling his nose with a straw or bit of twisted paper. To see the poor fellow bang away at the supposed fly or mosquito made the rest of us snicker, and sometimes brought the gad of the teacher about our shoulders. The fellow who wasn’t allowed to sleep didn’t have any heavy nuts to throw, but he sometimes evened up matters at recess by punching the one that had annoyed him. I used to try to look innocent when one of the big boys roused up and stared around to see who was pestering him, but I didn’t always succeed, and he settled with me when we got out of doors. But, Nughwa, do you intend to try to capture that white monkey?”

“I most certainly do.”

“How?”

“In a very few minutes you shall see.”

CHAPTER XVI

MAN VERSUS MONKEY

NUHGWA leaned his rifle against the nearest tree—a proceeding in direct violation of his own precepts; but he did not walk far, keeping all the time in sight, and stopped where a thick scrubby trunk seemed to be strangled by an exuberant growth of vines and creeping plants. Dudley Mayson saw him begin pulling at these until he had dragged down a considerable bunch. From among them, he drew forth what looked like a telegraph wire, covered with a few sprouts here and there, of which he cleared the vine, by drawing the latter through his closed hands. It was several rods in length, and so flexible that he coiled it over his left arm, as if it were a clothes line.

“This is my rope,” he said, as he walked back, and began making a loop at one end; “and if I can get that around the white monkey’s body or neck, I shall have him fast.”

“We have a saying in my country, Nughwa,

that the best way to catch certain birds is to sprinkle salt on their tails, but the trouble is to get near enough to the bird, to use the salt. You will have the same difficulty with this fellow. I wonder if he has any idea of what you are driving at."

"How could he?"

The action of our friends caused the white monkey to shift his position slightly, and he still peered at the couple, as if not satisfied with their movements. Nughwa studied him for some minutes in silence. Dudley Mayson saw an important obstacle to success.

"The vine is so light you will find it hard to fling the loop over his head; it will not fly well, and, when he sees it coming toward him he will dodge it."

"And he will be quick to understand the trick I am trying to play on him; you are right, but there is a way of fixing that."

He groped through the grass until he found a jagged piece of stone. Around this he coiled one end of the vine, and tied it fast. The knot formed the farthest extremity of the loop, so, as you will see, Nughwa had only to throw the stone accurately, in order to utilize the lasso.

While this looked promising, another difficulty presented itself. It was useless to throw the

stone unless through a free space, and that did not seem likely to offer, for limbs, trees and obtruding branches were everywhere. Contact with any one of these was almost certain to spoil the aim, and Nughwa, who was skilful at such work, had to be on the lookout for such a slip, for, as he had said, if the first attempt failed, he would not gain the chance to make a second against the intelligent creature.

As if to invite a trial of wits, the white monkey now dropped from his perch to the ground, over which he scampered several paces, and then whisked upon a limb not more than a dozen feet above the head of the alert Nughwa.

“It is best you should keep away from me,” said the native in a low voice, without removing his eyes from the creature; “pass to the other side, and try to scare him over toward me.”

Dudley kept his gun in hand, and hurried to a point two or three rods from his friend. The peculiar actions of the couple now attracted the notice of nearly all the monkeys, who from their stations at different heights among the branches, and for ever chattering, looked down upon the performances of the man and boy. ☉

One of the exasperating features of the situation was that several of the animals, for whom our friends cared nothing, whisked past the

native so close that it would have been the easiest thing in the world to lasso them. They seemed really to understand that they were not wanted, and were in no danger, and therefore they kept getting in the way. Nughwa gave them no attention and kept stealing in and out among the trees, with his eyes fixed on the white fellow, who more than once allowed him to approach quite near.

By and by, the prize, after peering down at the man for a minute or so, scrambled out on a limb directly over his head. He was hardly twenty feet above the native, and no branch intruded to interfere with the throw. Nughwa held the loop loosely grasped between his thumb and forefinger, and saw that the right chance had come at last. He began whirling the loop about his wrist, carefully measuring the distance, and almost certain of having the prize fast the next minute.

At the crisis, the very same fellow that had tickled the ear of the white monkey ran along a limb directly below him, his larger body rising in such a way that he fully shielded the smaller one. Had the loop been thrown, it would have been certain to entrap him instead of the other. The impatient Nughwa stepped to one side to gain the chance he needed, but the larger one

also shifted so as still to intervene. It was impossible that he understood the purpose of the white man. It must have been one of those perverse occurrences which are too much for the tempers of the best of people.

Nughwa took a hasty step in the opposite direction. The larger animal did not move. The way was thus left open and he again made hasty preparation to fling the lasso, but, before he could do so, the white monkey leaped nimbly to another branch, and whisked behind the trunk of the tree, peeping out in the most tantalizing manner conceivable.

Dudley Mayson stood some distance off, absorbed in the performance. While tempted to smile at the disappointment of his friend, he sympathized too much with him to do so. He could understand how he felt.

“I don’t wonder that he would like to shoot the creature, for I believe that is the only way of making him a prisoner; I know I should feel angry enough to take a shot at him, but it would be with the purpose of killing and not merely wounding him—”

Bang! something struck the youth on his head, almost knocking him off his feet.

“Who threw that stone?” he angrily de-

manded, whirling about with his fist clenched and ready to punish his assailant.

But no one had flung a missile at him. One of the monkeys, with a huge nut in his grasp, had climbed to a point directly over the youth, and then dropped the fruit, doing so with such careful aim that it came down squarely on the lad's crown.

The occurrence filled the monkeys to bursting with delight. They scampered back and forth among the limbs, chattering their happiness. The rascal who had turned the trick was too proud to contain himself. He grimaced and danced hither and thither, dropped through three or four branches, dexterously caught himself with one paw, scrambled up again, and then came down as lightly as a feather to the ground, only a few paces from his victim, where he stood moving his jaws, as if chewing gum with ape-like vivacity.

Dudley Mayson was angry enough to shoot him, and he brought his gun to his shoulder to do so, but was sharply reprovved by Nughwa, who had turned his attention for the moment in that direction.

“Do not harm him; he hasn't hurt you; your skull is too thick to be harmed that way.”

“I hope you will get one on *your* head; then you will know how it feels.”

“I have had a good many; so long as the husk is on the fruit, and you have a covering for your head, as you have, you can stand such things all day.”

As it was, Dudley would not have slain his assailant, for before he could aim, his natural kindness of heart asserted itself, and he lowered the weapon. He had not forgiven the creature however, and seeing him almost within reach, determined to punish him.

“If you don’t know any better, you must take the consequences,” muttered our young friend, who could not have asked a finer opportunity than that which suddenly presented itself.

As if the offender cared nothing further for the lad whom he had insulted, he turned his face away from him and looked at the man. Dudley quickly ran a few paces, and then, concentrating his strength in his good right foot, made the greatest kick of his life.

Had the animal been where the youth expected him to be, he would have been lifted several feet and sent sprawling on his face, for the effort was a mighty one; but the monkey was on the watch, and dexterously slipped out of the way. Nothing is more wrenching than to kick

vacancy, and the foot whizzed so high in air that it lifted the young man with it, and he dropped on his back with a thump that shook the ground.

Intense as was the interest of Nughwa in the capture of the white monkey, he had ceased his efforts for the moment to watch the actions of his friend. When he saw him raised in air by his own performance and drop flat on his back, the man seemed to forget everything else. Holding his mirth in check, he stepped to the youth, who had picked up his hat that had been jarred off, and was climbing to his feet with a very red face and sheepish expression.

“How do you expect me to capture the white monkey?” demanded the native with pretended anger, “when you act that way toward him?”

“Act what way? What are you talking about?”

“Isn’t he sitting on that limb away up in the tree? And didn’t you try to kick him off just now, when I was ready to throw the loop over his head?”

“Nughwa, I think if you would give less attention to me and more to that white monkey you would have a better chance of success.”

“I like to look at *all* kinds of monkeys,” remarked Nughwa, with a significant glance at Dudley, who could not mistake his meaning.

The good nature of the youth was quick to return, and he held his comrade in too high regard to feel any resentment because of his jests. The joke was certainly on the youth, and the most sensible thing he could do was to accept the fact. None the less, it struck him as curious that Nughwa should withdraw his attention from the prize, at the time when he ought to have been devoting every energy toward securing it.

“I don’t have much success in handling monkeys—that’s a fact,” said Dudley; “they seem to get the better of me every time; do you think you can lasso that creature?”

“There seemed to be a chance once or twice, but he is a mighty cunning fellow and manages to keep out of my reach.”

“We may as well let him go and hurry on home.”

“Not yet; you know that monkeys like to imitate us, and that they have a good deal of curiosity; I think of trying to make use of that.”

“I don’t believe it will work, but you know more of such things than I, and you needn’t ask my advice.”

Nughwa took considerable time to carry out the scheme he had formed, and displayed not a little originality. He first laid the loop beside

the base of the tree on which the white animal had perched a few minutes before. Then he walked the length of the vine and dropped the end at his feet, where he could instantly stoop and catch it up.

“If a monkey will come down the tree and put his foot in *that* trap,” said Dudley, “he is a bigger fool than I ever thought he was.”

“I do not expect him to do that, unless there is something to attract him.”

Nughwa returned to the foot of the tree, and, drawing his knife thrust the point deep into the earth, so deeply indeed that it would have taken a strong effort to pull it out. His hope was that the white monkey would descend the trunk, impelled by his own curiosity, and try to get possession of the weapon. Should he make the effort, he would be quite certain to give the native a chance to entrap him. In other words, he had flung out a line, baiting it with his knife, to catch a valuable “fish.”

It will be seen that Nughwa ran a risk of losing his property, for one of the animals might snatch it out and avoid the loop. In fact, he did not intend to spring the trap for any of the creatures except the one he was after. He had driven the weapon so deep into the ground that he did not believe the most powerful monkey

could extract it. Yet he might be mistaken, and if one of them ran off with the implement, the owner was not likely ever to see it again. However, he took the chance.

The action of the animals among the limbs showed they had been watching every move of the native, and were in a great state of mind over it. After whisking here and there for some time, several dropped to the ground and made circuits around the tree, scrutinizing the knife whose handle projected upward through the loop of vine. They were interested in it, and the hopes of both Nughwa and Dudley Mayson were roused when they saw the white monkey join the party, apparently as curious as any of them. If he would take the lead in investigation, his doom was sealed. But would he make the venture?

CHAPTER XVII

A FAILURE

WHILE the white monkey displayed as much curiosity as his companions, he provokingly kept clear of the loop, which Nughwa was on the alert to snap fast, the instant the chance offered. The hand of the guide was steady, and he did not move a muscle, but his nerves were tense, and he was on the point more than once of sharply jerking the line, but waited until certain of success.

Suddenly a big fellow stepped squarely over the loop into the circle made by the coil, seized hold of the knife handle with both paws, and pulled with might and main. The weapon did not budge.

“Isn’t that the fellow that hit me on my head with a nut?” asked the excited Dudley.

“I think he is.”

“Give a yank to the vine and you’ll have him fast.”

“I know that, but he isn’t the one I’m after.”

“I wish you would jerk his leg off; it would serve him right for what he did to me.”

“Sh! you had a chance to give him a kick; you must fight your own battles.”

The large monkey grew angry because the knife did not yield to his tugging. His species are not specially noted for strength, and it would have taken much more power than he could summon to secure the weapon. He uttered angry cries after his failure, and then stepped back to let some other one try his hand.

The white one came forward, put one foot over the loop, and the hearts of the two bipeds beat high with hope, but just then a bigger fellow crowded him aside and gripped the handle.

At this trying juncture, the white monkey stood with his back toward our friends, chattering and absorbed in the efforts of his companions. Nughwa suddenly ran forward a few paces, snapping back the loop as he did so, and it was in his grasp in a twinkling, and before the animals understood what he had done. - One of them observing his quick, stealthy approach, emitted a warning cry. All scattered in a panic.

At that instant, Nughwa flung the weighted loop with such deftness that it slipped over the head of the white monkey, but dropped below his waist before the native could make it taut.

When he did so, however, it closed about one of his legs, and the prize was caught fast.

“Hurrah! you’ve got him!” exclaimed the delighted Dudley.

The prisoner uttered a scream almost human in its agony, went up the tree in a flash and threw both arms around a limb and held on like grim death. His movements were so quick that despite his seeming helplessness, he gained a marked advantage, which Nughwa perceived a moment too late. The guide ought to have jerked his prisoner toward him or seized him before he could scamper beyond his immediate reach.

All that was left to Nughwa to do was to pull, and he did so with a vigour that seemed to lengthen the body of the simian, which clung fast with a resolution that would have suffered death before yielding.

“Can’t you pull him down?” asked Dudley.

“I’m afraid I can get only his leg and that isn’t of any account.”

“Let me climb the tree and seize him.”

“It won’t do; they will attack you; don’t you see how excited they are?”

The other creatures were frantic. They uttered their cries of terror, darted here and there among the limbs, and most of them gathered

among the branches of the tree in which the entrapped one had taken refuge. They whisked up and down and were eager to do something to help their unfortunate comrade, but saw no way of doing it.

“Here! hold the line and I will reach him,” said Nughwa, yielding the vine to Dudley, who grasped it firmly.

The native ran to the base of the tree, wrenched his knife from the ground, and thrusting it inside his jacket, began desperately climbing. He expected to be attacked by the animals, but believed he could defend himself successfully. If he could once lay hands on the captive, he would drop to the ground, where he and his friend could use their guns, if it should become necessary.

“Hurry, Nughwa, or you’ll be too late!” called Dudley, who had discerned an unexpected danger. The native did not pause to ask its nature, for he perceived it already and had not a second to waste.

That which alarmed Dudley Mayson was the action of the very animal that had dropped the nut on to his crown. Braver, or perhaps more intelligent than the others, he seized the vine-cord, close to the loop that had closed

around one of the legs of the prisoner. and began fiercely gnawing it.

Dudley gave the line a tug, hoping to bring down the captive before he could be freed. He pulled so hard that the shrill cry of the poor prisoner rose above the deafening din, but an iron chain could not have held more firmly than the arms locked over the limb above his head. Dudley had not the heart to do more and ceased pulling.

All depended now upon Nughwa, who resembled the monkeys in the celerity of his climbing.

He had only a brief distance to go, and it would seem he ought to succeed. The animals kept up an incessant din, and seemed on the point of attacking the man coming so rapidly up the trunk, but for the moment refrained. Nughwa looked aloft and saw the taut leg only a few inches beyond his reach. He thrust himself upward, reached for the imprisoned limb, and—was just a second too late.

When the big fellow undertook to chew the vine in two, the task was not very hard. A monkey's dentition is similar to a man's, though some of them display a brutal prominence of their canine teeth. This specimen had enough sharp incisors to sever the vine, which dropped upon the head of Nughwa, and then fell dan-

gling to the ground. He was so near the prisoner that he snatched at the bit that was still hanging to his leg, and actually touched it, but the released captive made an extraordinary bound to an adjoining branch and scooted to the topmost boughs, where he was beyond reach.

Nughwa cast a disgusted look at him and then dropped to the ground.

“No use now,” he said, “that’s the end of it; he’ll take care not to come within reach of us again; are you sure it isn’t best for me to wound him?”

“I wouldn’t have you do it for the world; he has been half-scared to death as it is, and must suffer from the pulling of his leg. There’s only one monkey in that crowd, Nughwa, that I’m willing to see you shoot.”

“The one that dropped a nut on to your own nut, and that wouldn’t stand still and let you kick him; I have nothing against him.”

“He set the white monkey free.”

“That is no more than he ought to have done. Yonder he is squatting alongside the white one, and sympathizing with him; suppose you try a shot at him?”

“No; I was only jesting; nothing would induce me to harm him; do you intend to let the white one go?”

“If you can tell me any way to prevent it I won’t; but there isn’t any use in staying here longer; let’s move on.”

Shouldering their rifles once more, they resumed their homeward journey, and had gone less than half a mile when an abrupt change of the elephant spoor was noticed.

“From this point,” said Nughwa, “the course of the three is north.”

They paused and looked at the broken path made by the three huge creatures, as they trampled through the jungle. It will be remembered that our friends had not caught a glimpse of them since the previous day. The guide did not think the animals were far in advance, but there was no way of telling whether the trail was one hour or ten hours old.

“The white elephant and his friends seem to have all sorts of whims,” said Dudley, “for they make many changes in their line of flight.”

“When they made this one they had good reason. Elephants are wise and the three knew they were getting close to a village, so they turned northward to keep away from it; we are hardly a dozen miles from the missionary station.”

“You are not sorry for this change of route by the white elephant?”

“No; it took place at the right point; if he had gone nearer the settlement, he would probably have been seen by our friends.”

“And they would not have allowed him to get away if they could prevent it?”

“You may be sure of that; all the well people would have gone wild and joined in the hunt,—all except the good missionary.”

“And why not he?”

“He is looking for his son,” was the impressive reply; “nothing could persuade him to be away when he arrived.”

“I believe you, Nughwa; that is just like father; we shall leave the hunting of the white elephant until after we get to the station and then he may take part in it.”

“I should be glad to have him do so, but think he will not be willing; he is so good a man that he believes his duty is there. You know how ill he was a long time ago.”

“I never heard of it; mother said nothing about his illness, nor did he in his letters.”

“He became so weak and sick that I travelled all the way to Bangkok to bring a doctor. He was a very skilful man, and by and by your father began to get strength. When he was able to move around, the doctor told him he could not promise him his life, unless he left the

country and made a long visit to his home on the other side of the world."

"And what did father say to that?"

"He said the Lord had called him to this field and here he must stay; he would not leave his children, as he speaks of us, but was prepared to lie down and leave his family, when his Father wished him to do so."

Dudley's eyes kindled.

"Was there ever a better man? But he was always that way and this is the first time I have heard of it. But tell me, Nughwa, did he get fully well?"

The native smiled.

"I heard him say only a few days ago that he is better than in all his life; you see he had to pass through what comes to almost every foreigner who makes his home in Siam—at least in some parts of it: he dies or becomes stronger than before. The Lord was not ready to have him depart. Your father has a strange notion."

"What is that?"

"He says that now that he has become used to the Siamese climate, he would run the same risk that he has passed through if he went to America. More than that, he could not live through it as he did through his trial some time

ago. 'And how would I feel, Nughwa,' he said to me, 'when called upon to give my Heavenly Father an account of my stewardship? My head would be bowed with shame to think I had fainted on the road.' "

"There seems to be reason in his view, but, Nughwa, do you think this acclimatization, as I believe it is called, will affect *me* in the same way?"

"I think not; the Bangkok doctor explained that it does not come to young persons, I suppose because it is easier for them to grow used to our climate and way of living."

"How about mother and sister Fannie?"

"They have not seen an ill day since they came to Siam; so I am sure you need not fear anything of the kind will come to you."

Dudley Mayson was profoundly interested in the words of the guide. While he could not understand the matter as a professional person or an adult traveller might have understood it, he felt there was reason in what he had heard. His father had become so accustomed to life in America that the radical change brought a physical crisis to him, similar to that which has carried many aliens to their graves. It was natural that Fannie should be able to adapt herself to these changes, but it was strange that they had

not affected his mother. Still, he remembered hearing the surgeon on shipboard say that her sex often passes through strains upon their health under which the strongest of men go down like reeds in a hurricane.

“It must have been that way with mother,” he reflected, “for she was never very strong; I remember how father used to toss her about like a child and she was only a plaything in his hands, but she stood this country better than he. Still, if he is stronger than ever before, it must be because of his vigour, strength and good habits.”

These and similar reflections came to the lad as he tramped through the jungle on the heels of Nughwa, the guide. They served to inspirit him, for when every phase of that which he had learned came to be considered, it will be admitted that he had good cause to feel encouraged and to look forward to his own residence in this partly barbarous land with far different feelings from those that had been his while on the voyage thither.

CHAPTER XVIII

A MEMORABLE BATH

A SINGULAR feature of the stream they were following attracted the attention of Dudley Mayson. Although they were proceeding toward its source, it grew broader and apparently deeper. Its width became double that of the place where they had crossed on their raft.

“You are right,” said Nughwa, when his young friend mentioned the fact; “and the broadening continues until it becomes a lagoon. The current is so slow that you can hardly see any at all.”

“I have seen no crocodiles for some time.”

“That doesn’t mean there is none; you will find them in almost all the streams of this part of Siam, but there are plenty of fish, and we have species that you never saw in your country.”

“There is nothing strange in that, for it may be said of nearly every part of the world.”

“You must visit the Meinam,” explained the guide, while the two were traversing a slightly-marked path, which clung to the shore of the lagoon; “for there you will see fish that travel over the land.”

In answer to the youth’s look of astonishment, Nughwa added:

“It is true; many fish leave the river, glide over the moist banks and lose themselves in the jungle. They seem to be wanderers that love to roam from the water.”

Dudley would have found it hard to believe this amazing assertion had he not been sure his companion was a truthful man. Moreover, after hearing the strange statement, the youth recalled that some years before, his mother, in one of her letters, had mentioned seeing the thing of which the native spoke.

“I think she said there was more than one kind of such fishes.”

“She was right; your good father and I made a study of them and found there were three species of wandering fish—the gla-xon, the pla-mo and the pla-duk. The pla-xon is a savage creature, about the size of a carp, and makes such good eating that many thousands are salted and dried and sent to China and Java every year.”

“Father once made mention of the ‘dog’s tongue.’ ”

“We have plenty of them. In crossing these waters, I have had several fasten themselves to the bottom of the boat. They pressed their mouths against it and made a noise that was a curious kind of music.”

“I have never heard a singing fish.”

“You will hear more than one before you have been long in Siam.”

“Do they make good eating?”

“We do not take them for that, though they might answer. Why do you look at the water so closely?”

“I can’t help thinking, Nughwa, what a splendid bathing place this pond is. An American boy could no more pass it by on a hot, sultry day, than one of our coloured people could refuse to eat a ripe watermelon.”

“I was certain you were thinking of something of the kind,” said Nughwa with a smile; “would you really like to take a swim?”

“Nothing could delight me more; is it safe?”

“As safe here as in any part of the country; there is nothing to be feared from crocodiles, though we shall see plenty of them farther up stream.”

“Why do you feel so sure there is none of them?”

“I can hardly say that, but I have crossed this lagoon many times without ever seeing one. If there were any, they would be apt to be sunning themselves along the shore at this time of day, as the one you saw was doing. Still, they sometimes push into the mud at the bottom of a stream or lagoon, and come up when they hear a splashing near them.”

“Have you ever been in swimming here?”

“Many times; your father was with me twice.”

“And neither of you was harmed?”

“Not in the least. From some cause which I do not understand (perhaps it is springs in the bottom) the water is cooler than elsewhere, so you ought to know why it is so attractive to us.”

Dudley walked to the edge of the water and stirred it with his hand. He was surprised by its coolness. As he turned about, he observed that his companion had begun disrobing. The hint was sufficient, and Dudley stood in his “buff” as soon as did the man.

“I must tell you,” added Nughwa, as they were about to enter, “that there is always *some* danger, though it may be slight; but that may be

said of us no matter where we are and whether it is night or day; I will try to keep watch for you."

It would have taken a very grave peril to hold the American lad from entering the water, now that he had disrobed, and the clear, cool element seemed to beckon him to its embrace. He noticed that the bottom sloped rapidly, and the guide had told him the depth was considerable. After the manner of all well regulated boys, Dudley took a quick run of several rods, and leaped as far out as he could, with feet up, head down and his hands joined in front so as to form a wedge. That he was a skilful diver was proved by his darting under the surface with hardly a splash. Nughwa watched him admiringly.

The youth went downward until his hands softly touched the bottom. Then he turned and his head shot into sight, fully fifty feet from land. He blew the water from his mouth, opened his eyes and flirited the wisp of hair from his forehead, facing about and calling to his friend:

"Why are you waiting? Are you afraid?"

"I don't think so," grinned the native, who, the next moment, imitated the lad and disappeared from sight.

The lagoon was only comparatively clear. Looking down, Dudley could not distinguish the bottom, nor could he catch sight of his friend, who he knew was groping somewhere below.

“I think from the way he looked and acted,” reflected the youth, “that he means to play a trick on me; I never saw a fellow like fun more than he does.”

The lad swam a rod or two from where he was when the native made his dive, and then waited with all his senses on the alert.

“He means to come up right under me and give me an upset or—hello! there he is now!”

Something seized his toe, but Dudley snatched the member away so vigorously that he instantly freed himself from the clutch. He was sure the vice was caused by the guide’s thumb and forefinger, but was not a little astonished when Nughwa broke the surface a dozen feet away.

“Nughwa, you can travel fast under water,” called Dudley; “you caught my toe, but I shook you off.”

The native had turned on his back to float, but on hearing these words, he flirited over again, and swimming slowly toward his young friend, said:

“Did something seize your toe?”

“A fine question for you to ask! You know well enough that you did so.”

The bronzed face was grave.

“My friend, I did mean to overturn you, but you slipped away from the spot where I expected to find you; I have not touched you at all.”

“My goodness! *something* did,” gasped the scared lad; “what was it?”

“Nothing I think that you need fear; perhaps it was some kind of a fish that you disturbed, and he thought he would disturb *you*.”

“It may have been something more dangerous.”

“It was not.”

“How can you know that?”

“Because if it were, you wouldn’t have been able to shake it off; it meant you no harm and you need feel no fear of it.”

Every boy knows the disquieting feeling caused by the knowledge that he is swimming in water which contains something that is likely to act like the fish that seized and was compelled to abandon the toe of Dudley Mayson. No matter if you are sure the bite can cause no harm, it startles you to come in contact with any living thing under the surface. But the assurance of Nughwa that they had nothing to fear

from disturbances of that nature, and still more, the coolness of the native himself, drove away the fears of the youth, who was soon disporting with all the abandon of the old days in his distant home at the antipodes.

Nughwa was as frolicsome as he. Like all his people he was a skilful swimmer, who appeared to be as much at home in the water as on the land. He dived, darted forward with a breast or a side stroke, floated, dropped out of sight, and remained so long below that Dudley was frightened. The youth admired his dexterity, and the native, at the same time, was astonished at the boy's expertness. He had never seen his equal among the Siamese youths. What he specially liked was the even, powerful stroke of Dudley, who, turning his shoulder against the water and circling a hand over his head, shot forward with a speed that the veteran could not surpass. He complimented his young friend, and for fifteen or twenty minutes the two enjoyed themselves to the full.

"We have had enough," finally remarked the elder; "let us go ashore.

"I am willing whenever you say the word."

Dudley Mayson failed to notice the significance of his friend's action. At the moment he spoke, the elder was a little nearer to land, but

he held back, so as to permit the boy to pass him for a few strokes. A close observer would have seen that Nughwa was not at ease. He glanced at the youth, then out on the lagoon, and then looked down, so far as he could into the translucent depths. He kept swimming toward the bank, but purposely loitered, so that the interval between him and Dudley steadily widened. Whether the man had discovered anything to cause disquiet, or whether it was merely precaution on his part, cannot be explained, for he never made it clear.

Be that as it may, Dudley was still quite a distance from shore, when Nughwa shouted:

“Swim faster! There’s a meng-phu after you!”

The young man had never heard of a “meng-phu,” but he did not wait for explanations. He knew the danger was imminent, and on the instant he began swimming with desperate energy. No one can understand the terrifying situation of a man pursued by a shark, except him who has passed through the ordeal. Dudley Mayson could not know the nature of his pursuer, but he was sure it was some frightful thing that would make short work of him if he were overtaken.

It was not far to land, and he made swift

progress, but in his excited state, it seemed to him he never advanced so sluggishly.

“Faster!” called the frightened Nughwa, “or you are lost!”

One of Dudley’s feet struck the bottom. Dropping the other foot, he dashed forward, and with a single bound landed on solid ground. It was well that even then he did not halt, but took a couple of steps before checking himself.

No escape could have been narrower, for the meng-phu made a fierce leap out of the water, with open mouth, and fell almost against the heel of the fugitive, who glanced around in time to see it make a couple of flaps, and, dropping back into the lagoon, glide out of sight.

The glimpse which the boy caught of the meng-phu showed a fish of vivid greenish-blue colour, that must have weighed fifty pounds. It seems to be angered by any bather who intrudes upon its domains and makes a vicious attack upon him. It sometimes leaps several feet out of water, like the American sturgeon, with the difference that the latter does so for pleasure and the former in the way of “business.” It is probable that in the instance before us, the meng-phu was some distance away, and was not disturbed until the frolicking of the bathers had lasted a considerable while. When provoked

because the nuisance was not abated, it interfered.

When Nughwa perceived that his young friend was safe, he swam swiftly toward him and narrowly escaped an encounter with a still more dangerous creature than the meng-phu. Dudley called that something was after him, but the native had already discovered it, and succeeded through his wonderful quickness in reaching shore without harm, though his enemy was close upon him.

The right name of the latter fish is "tetradon," but it is called "the moon" by the Siamese, on account of its peculiarity in inflating itself into a ball as round as a globe. It eagerly attacks a bather, and, though it has no teeth, its jaws are as sharp and hard as a knife. Jamming its nose against a person's leg, it will gouge out enough flesh to make an ugly wound which requires a long time to heal.

"I guess that's enough bathing for to-day," laughed Nughwa, as he coolly began donning his garments.

"I rather think it is," assented Dudley Mayson.

CHAPTER XIX

A STARTLING OCCURRENCE

FOR two or three miles our friends tramped, keeping in sight of the lagoon all the time, and following the faintly marked trail that was familiar to Nughwa. Nothing further was seen of the spoor of the elephants, and no doubt the three were a goodly distance to the northward.

The day proved to be one of the hottest of the season, as the guide himself admitted. The heat of the flaming sun penetrated through the foliage, and the temperature became smothering. It seemed to Dudley Mayson that the rifle which he carried over his shoulder had tripled in weight, and his steps lagged, as if he had trodden a score of miles. But he showed his pluck by repressing all complaints and sturdily maintaining his place close to his leader.

The latter had shown his consideration more than once, and knew the lad was suffering, without the furtive glances he took several times

at him. Inured as he was to the trying climate of his native land, Nughwa felt the fatigue. Finally he paused under a large cocoa palm tree, with the remark:

“You are a brave boy to stand this as you do without murmuring; I know you are worn out.”

“How is it with yourself?”

“If I were alone, I should press on to the station, but I feel the need of rest. Here, then, we shall pause for an hour or two.”

“Will that give us the time we need to reach home before night?”

“We can wait as long as I said, and enter the station at dusk; it will be more pleasant than to do so while the heat is so great.”

Dudley flung himself on the ground, dropping his gun beside him, and with a sigh of relief said:

“I wish this were walking, but I shall soon be rested; you must have patience with me, Nughwa, for I am not used to your country.”

“I do not need patience, for none could do better than you.”

No more delightful spot, in the circumstances, could have been selected. At intervals, a cool, soft breeze stole over the lagoon, as if born in the forest twilight beyond and fanned the crimson face of the youth, who, removing his Pan-

ama, added to the gentle stir of the air. On the farther side of the natural lake the snouts of two crocodiles were seen, proving what the guide had said, that the reptiles preferred this portion to that lower down, where the two had had their memorable bath. From among the trees came the chatter of monkeys, and the cries of parrots and different kinds of birds. It was noticeable that all these noises were harsh and discordant, not a note among them being comparable to that of the thrush, oriole, meadow lark, or even the robin, to which he had often listened in his own country. Nature seems to think that when she gives a bird a gaudy plumage, she has done enough without dowering it with the sweet, trilling voices of the more sober-hued songsters.

“Why do you not sit down, Nughwa?”

“It is time to eat; I will soon come back.”

Rifle in hand, he sauntered into the jungle, immediately passing from sight, and returned a few minutes later, bearing several big bananas and mangosteens, which the two ate with relish, neither feeling any craving for more substantial food.

Seated thus, the native said:

“We are not far from your home, as you know; and only a little way from here is a hill

from the top of which I wish to take a look over the country.”

“Can we see the station?” asked Dudley, sitting up with renewed interest; “if we can, I should like to learn its appearance from a distance.”

“No, but there is another hill, not far beyond, which we must climb; from the top of that you can see Wahta-Shat, and I can point out the house of the good missionary.”

“What is it you wish to see?”

“The view is to the northward; a half mile off is an open space where a kind of shrub grows that the elephants like.”

“You hope to see the three we have been following.”

“That is it; would you like to go with me?”

Dudley rose to his feet and was about to pick up his gun, when he checked himself and straightened up again.

“Nughwa, is it much of a climb to the top of the first elevation?”

“I must answer yes; not only that, but we must leave the path that is so great a help to us; it will be hard work, picking our way through the jungle.”

“Then I’ll be hanged if I’ll tramp it for a dozen white elephants!” exclaimed the lad re-

seating himself; "go ahead, Nughwa, and get all the sight you want; you can stay away for a couple of hours if you choose."

"I may be gone that time, for the walk is long and I have told you it is hard."

"Then why do you take it? What good will it do you to see the white elephants, if you can do nothing more?"

"Do you not like to look upon things which it is pleasant to see? Why do you wish to have a view of your new home?"

"That is very different; the home where my parents and sister live must always have the sweetest charm in the world to me; who knows," asked the son, with glowing eyes, "that I may not catch sight of one of my folks?"

"Well, I cannot dispute with you: I will now bid you good bye."

As he started to move off, he checked himself as if not quite at ease in mind.

"I think you have learned to be careful; you know it is not well to disturb any animals in the jungle unless you mean to shoot them. These monkeys have noticed us, but they do not show much interest; they will not harm you, if you let them alone."

"Is it possible that any of the friends of the white monkey are among them?"

The native shook his head.

“We left them behind long ago; they will not bother us again.”

Looking off over the lagoon, Nughwa added, as if speaking to himself:

“The day is very hot; the water is cool; a bath would be good.”

“If you mean those words for me,” said Dudley with a smile, “you needn’t repeat them; I know all you say, but the meng-phis, the moonfish, the crocodiles, and I don’t know what other nuisances can have the water to themselves for all I care.”

The native felt he had said enough in the way of warning, and now took his departure, disappearing almost instantly from sight. Instead of lying down, as he was inclined, Dudley held the sitting posture, gazing off over the lagoon to the deep green foliage on the other side. He was so near the water that there was little or no obstruction to his view.

He felt no special interest in the scene, for, brief as had been his time in Siam, he had become quite well accustomed to the peculiar sights which met him at every turn. The distance to the other side of the lagoon was something more than two hundred yards. Brief as this was, it looked to him that the trees, vines,

and foliage were so densely interwoven, that it was impossible for a man to thread his way through them. Yet Nughwa at that moment was advancing through similar obstructions to the hill from which to survey the country to the northward.

There is no end to the exuberance of animal life in a tropical forest. Dudley Mayson caught glimpses of birds of the most brilliant plumage fitting among the green leaves. One of these was of such dazzling crimson that it suggested a torch flirled here and there by an invisible hand; another in form resembled the homely peacock, except that its vivid colouring was differently arranged. It sat in full view for some minutes and then flapped lazily to another limb on the outskirts of the jungle with a cry as harsh as the peacock of which the youth was thinking. There were smaller birds which darted to and fro with such swiftness that they were like winged bullets. In the blue sky, devoid of the slightest wisp of a cloud, two birds with an immense spread of wings came sailing out of the azure depths, half-way across the lagoon, circled about and returned again over the edge of the jungle. There they hovered for several seconds, describing smaller circles, and then suddenly dipped down among the vegeta-

tion, as if they were a couple of hawks coursing the Atlantic shore for fish.

The young man knew no more of these birds than of the species of trees which met him at every step. He had learned to recognize the durio tree, cocoa palm and banana—mainly from their fruit—but that was about all. He was sure his father had learned all there was to know of the fauna and flora of Siam, and the son reflected on the pleasure that would be his to study under his tutelage.

Under the spell of this aimless reverie, the youth awoke to the fact that one of the crocodiles on the other side of the lagoon was in motion. He did not observe the reptile until it was well out of the water. Only the long, knobby snout was visible, but the direction in which it was pointed was toward our young friend. It was coming straight for him, and, unless it changed its course, would touch the shore hardly twenty yards from where he was sitting.

It could not be the saurian had observed him from that distance, for scientific tests have proved that its species can hardly see three or four times their own length, while many serpents cannot see even to that extent. Dudley Mayson had learned of this peculiarity, and

knew it was impossible that the huge reptile was aware of his presence. If it should land near him, it would be simply one of those coincidences that are liable to occur at any time, and anywhere.

All the same, the youth did not intend to be caught at disadvantage. He examined his rifle and found it ready for any emergency. Then he rose to his feet, keeping his eye on the reptile. Not only that, but when he perceived it was still approaching, he took several steps toward the water's edge.

"Nughwa said I shouldn't bother any of the creatures in the jungle, unless I meant to shoot it; that's just what I mean to do with you, if I can get the chance."

What whim led the crocodile to maintain its course, it is impossible to say, but, had it been towed by a steam launch, it could not have followed a more direct line. Dudley's eyes sparkled with the anticipation which the hunter feels when he sees his royal game steadily coming within range. Not a thought of personal danger entered his head, and in truth, it is difficult to see why he should have felt any misgiving.

Several rods from shore, the saurian swerved slightly, as if about to shy off, and probably return or land at some other point. This looked

as if it were swimming for the mere sake of enjoying the contact with the water. Afraid of losing his game, the youth walked nearer the edge of the lagoon and hallooed:

“Come on; I should like to make your acquaintance.”

The saurian seemed to hear the hail. The space separating it from the lad was so slight that it probably caught a vague sight of the figure on the shore. Those repulsive creatures have little fear of anything. You have heard of their fierce fights with tigers, and they have been known to tip over a boat in order to make a dinner upon the occupants. This fellow must have believed it saw a possible meal within reach, for after a momentary hesitation, it emitted its peculiar half grunt and bellow, and came in a straight line toward the biped that had dared to defy it.

With every foot's decrease of the interval, the crocodile discerned more clearly. The sight of a plump, well-conditioned youngster must have been highly tempting, for the huge creature increased its speed. When its great snout was shoved over the land, and it could use its short legs, it advanced with a swiftness that was astonishing in so-bulky and oddly-built creature.

Dudley sank on one knee and levelled his rifle. His nerves were as steady as could have been those of Nughwa in similar circumstances. He aimed at the left eye of the crocodile, and, with his finger resting against the trigger, waited until it was within twenty feet and still advancing with increasing speed. The sphere of lead bored its way straight to the seat of life, and the crocodile whirled about, floundered and threshed the ground with desperate fierceness, and, still floundering, slapping and rolling, reached the water's margin, where it ceased to struggle.

“The next time a young gentleman from the United States of America sits down to rest, the best thing you can do is to let him alone;—I'm speaking to your kind, for I don't think *you* will ever be of much account again.”

Paying no further attention to his victim, Dudley carefully reloaded his rifle, for he had learned long before that the true hunter makes it a rule to do that first of all, since not only safety, but the commonest prudence demands such prompt precaution against surprise or mishap.

Brief as was the time that Dudley Mayson had stood in the glare of the sunlight, while awaiting the coming of the crocodile and

its shooting, he felt the effects of the heat. He stepped back under the shadow of the cocoanut tree, while reloading his gun, and he now resumed his seat on the ground, intending to give himself up to rest until the return of his friend. He was very tired, but he made himself a most comfortable couch of leaves and long grass before he settled himself to rest.

The frustration caused by the incident soon passed off, and, reclining in an easy posture, he was speedily overtaken by a drowsiness, which, if undisturbed, would quickly merge into slumber. His weariness of body, the hum of the forest, and the subdued murmur into which all sounds seemed to sink, united to steal away his senses.

But for this, he would have heard a soft, almost inaudible sound upon the lagoon, which steadily approached, and did not cease until as near to him as the body of the dead saurian which lay like a log, partly in and partly out of the water. But the sleeper was not in the least disturbed.

Lying thus, profoundly resting, the first emotion of which Dudley Mayson was dimly conscious was that of suffocation. He gasped and struggled in his sleep, and finally threw up his hands in the instinctive effort to free himself

from the incubus. But he was not able to reach his head. Before the hands got to his shoulders they were strongly grasped and forced back by some power which he could not resist, and of which he could not form the remotest conception.

CHAPTER XX

BOUND AND A CAPTIVE

DUDLEY MAYSON struggled desperately and in the effort opened his eyes. But he was blind and in a world of darkness, as if the sun, moon and stars were blotted from the sky. Still he strove, and, rising to a sitting position, found that some kind of a covering had been flung over his head, and, gathered and fastened at his waist, left the arms free, but held them within the inclosing substance.

The youth fought like a frantic person to free himself from the smothering sheet or sack. His first thought was that Nughwa had played a trick on him; but the native, while possessing a keen sense of humour, had never shown any disposition to play practical jokes. Besides, it was hardly possible that he could have secured the means of thus strangling his friend.

Dudley's next impression was that this country had produced some remarkable creature, which overcame its victims in this way, but a

few moments were enough to convince him of the impossibility of this being the case. Whatever the explanation, it was self-evident that human means were at work.

“Take this off!” shouted the muffled voice, as the owner still fought, and tore and kicked in the effort to release himself; “take this off or Nughwa will kill you!”

Dudley could hear some one moving about him, but not a syllable did the stranger utter by way of reply. The lad staggered to his feet, and yelled and leaped about in his furious attempts to force the maddening thing over his head. But for his terror, his appearance and actions would have been amusing, for he wobbled to and fro, fell upon one knee, clambered again to his feet, bumped against the trunk of the cocoa palm tree, and then abruptly paused, panting and exhausted.

Rallying slightly from the first shock, he tried to peer through the meshes of the bag, but it was so finely woven that the most he could see was the dim outlines of a man, standing two or three paces away, apparently contemplating him. The form was so vague that he was unable even to determine its stature.

The efforts of Dudley threw him into a profuse perspiration, and it seemed as if he would

really succumb to suffocation, because of the confined air he had to breathe. He tried to get his hand into his pocket to draw his knife with which to cut the sack, and succeeded after great effort, but to his dismay, the implement was missing; his captor must have extracted it while the prisoner was asleep.

But his fierce efforts accomplished one thing that brought partial relief. He was able slightly to press open the lower part of the bag, so as to admit a little fresh air of which he stood in sore need. Finding it useless to try to accomplish anything on his feet, he began moving here and there, in the effort to return to the trunk of the tree against which he intended to seat himself.

The slight separation of the lower part of the sheath allowed him to see several inches of the ground below his knees, and he was groping blindly, when he caught sight of the foot of his captor. Throughout all his panic and wild struggling Dudley had not been without a dim suspicion and hope that it might be Nughwa after all who was treating him thus roughly, but the sight of the strange foot settled that question. Nughwa wore sandals, as we know, but this foot was bare. Not only that, but it was notably larger than that of the guide, who would

have been quick to rush to the rescue of his young friend, had he dreamed of anything like this overtaking him.

Another step of the youth, and he saw the leg of the stranger to the knee. To that extent, the limb was without any covering, but its dusky color, seamed and scarred by tramping through the jungle, showed that the owner was a native of the country.

Who could he be and why had he perpetrated this outrage? If he felt enmity against the light-coloured youth from a foreign clime, why did he not despatch him as he reclined asleep on the ground? How came it that the man had the sack in his possession? What did he intend to do with his prisoner? Why did he not speak or make some response to the appeals of his helpless captive?

These and similar questions crowded the brain of poor Dudley Mayson, who, when he succeeded in locating the trunk of the cocoa tree, sank to the ground, with his back against it, but he could not formulate any explanation of the most remarkable occurrence.

If he was mystified and alarmed he was enraged. The young man had a temper of his own, and when he was able to pull himself together, he felt so indignant that, had he been

freed of the hideous sack, he would have leaped upon the author of his misfortunes, even though the man were double his own size.

“You are a coward! You are afraid of me! You don’t dare give me a chance! You have my gun and knife, but you keep out of my reach!”

Possibly these taunts might have produced effect had they been uttered in the language of the native, who stood some paces away, calmly contemplating his victim, as a spider surveys the fly that has been caught in the meshes of its web. He still refused to speak or to draw any closer to the captive.

Dudley Mayson did a lot of thinking, during the brief minutes he was allowed to keep his seat undisturbed on the ground. He reflected that the only article that could serve him in any way had been taken from his pocket. Could he have grasped a knife, he would have quickly cut an opening through the meshes in front of his face—one big enough to allow his arms and hands to pass through, and then his assailant would learn something he very much needed to learn.

“But I haven’t got any knife—so what’s the use of thinking of *that?*” impatiently muttered the lad.

Remembering how his wrists had been seized from the outside, when he tried to raise his hands, the youth did not repeat the effort. Instead, he cautiously leaned his head forward and endeavoured to use his teeth upon the meshes. He might as well have tried to gnaw through sheet iron. He gently felt about the cord at his waist for the knot, but a brief hunt told him it was outside of the sack. Could he have shoved one or both of his hands through, and seized the knot or knots, his captor would have been quick to observe the action and most likely would have been tempted to some cruel means of frustrating the effort.

Seated thus, with all his bright faculties at work, Dudley Mayson speedily reached the point of believing he was absolutely without hope, unless in the improbable contingency that his captor really meditated no harm to him. You know the boy was not one of those who commit the fatal mistake of waiting until in dire extremity before calling upon the only One who can save to the uttermost. He prayed fervently, and then strove with manly courage to face whatever was in store for him.

It caused him keen anguish to recall that when Nughwa left him to seek a view of the white elephant, he said he was likely to be gone

a couple of hours. Dudley had no means of knowing how long he had slept, but judged it could not have been more than a fourth of the time named. It was vain, therefore, to hope for the return of his friend until long after the captor had been given time to carry out his purpose, whatever it might be.

Suddenly the latter spoke. He uttered several words in a strange, guttural voice, the meaning of which of course was unknown to the prisoner. All that the latter could do was to call upon him again to release him, or at least to let him suffer some other kind of death than strangulation, but the appeal as before fell upon deaf ears.

Dudley ceased his prayers. His tense nerves told him the man was moving. He heard his bare feet fall softly on the turf, and the next moment he gripped the right arm of Dudley through the sack and jerked him upright. The fingers of the stranger were like a vice, and told the prisoner that even if he were freed, he was helpless against his powerful captor, who could do as he chose with him.

“ I suppose he means to walk me to the lagoon and drown me,” was the despairing thought of Dudley, who had no choice but to yield to his master. The lower limbs of the youth being

free, he was able to walk with little difficulty. The native was now so close to his side that he could observe through the sack that he was taller than Nughwa, who, none the less, Dudley believed would prove his master in a hand-to-hand struggle.

If the captor meant to dispose of his captive by drowning, he showed no haste in doing so. Possibly he had fixed upon a different method from that in the mind of the boy; for, when they reached the water, he muttered some words in his gruff, husky voice, and began guiding the prisoner into some kind of boat, in which he had come to the spot. Unable to use his hands to help himself, Dudley employed his feet for that purpose. The craft resembled an American dug-out, being the large trunk of a tree, hollowed and closed at the ends. The youth could not help being awkward, and the man grew impatient. Seizing Dudley in his arms, he lifted him clear, and deposited him angrily at one end of the boat, where the prisoner could do nothing except to sit mute and helpless.

He had been jarred by the violence with which he was set in position and it angered him again.

“I only wish I had half a chance,” was his thought; “if I couldn’t do anything more, I would make things lively for you.”

The boat sank under the weight of the man, who carefully stepped in and took up the paddle, with which he had propelled the craft to this spot. Then Dudley heard him dip it first on one side and then on the other. He paddled slowly, as if time were of no importance to him.

“If he heads up stream, it may be in the direction taken by Nughwa, but, if the other way, my friend will have no means of knowing where I have gone. What will he think when he comes back to the cocoa palm tree and sees nothing of me?”

One fact gave our young friend slight hope. He recalled that Nughwa must have heard the report of his rifle, when he shot the crocodile. He would suspect that some unusual cause had produced it, particularly since he had warned Dudley not to use his gun in the way of mere sport. On the other hand, if the sound had caused the guide misgiving, he would have been under the tree long before; so, after all, when the lad came to reflect further, this hope vanished.

In his distressing state, Dudley devoted his utmost energy to determining the course taken by the native. The youth was at the stern of the boat. Through the sack which was composed of some kind of matting or very thin and

pliable bark, he could make out the sinewy figure, as he swayed the paddle first on the right and then the left. Peering in the latter direction, Dudley saw nothing at all, but on the right a dim shadow seemed to brood, which he believed was made by the jungle on the opposite side of the lagoon. If he were right, then the craft was moving up stream,—that is, partly in the direction taken by Nughwa.

It was a flimsy foundation, indeed, but, such as it was, Dudley Mayson eagerly seized it. He felt that while there was life there was hope.

By and by, he became sensible that the speed of the boat was decreasing. The paddling became gentler; then it ceased, and a minute later, the prow gently touched the shore and the strange voyage came to an end.



He could scarcely see through the sack.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE ISLAND

DUDLEY MAYSON having learned long before that his captor was not Nughwa, might have believed he was the native whom he had seen the day previous on the edge of the path of the tornado. He could understand how a barbarian would be actuated by the motive of revenge in his course of action, strange as it was; but this supposition vanished with a glimpse of the man through the network of which the enveloping sack was composed. He was of unusual stature, which the other was not. It followed, therefore, that the captor and captive had never met before.

A singular experience befell the lad while seated in the prow of the dugout. He suffered so much, now that he was again exposed to the flaming rays of the sun, that he fidgeted and tried to shift the covering so as to give him more room to breathe. While doing this, he

discovered an opening two or three inches in diameter. Until then it had been behind him and was unnoticed. Whether it was cut by his captor with a view of affording the youth better means of respiration, or whether it was accidentally caused, Dudley had no means of knowing, but the moment he found the opening, he shifted the sack around so as to bring the aperture in front.

The relief was instant. He breathed more freely, and better perhaps than that, he was able, for the first time, to make good use of his eyes. Through the window, he was given a clear sight of the Siamese who had made him prisoner. He was sitting near the stern of the boat, holding the paddle suspended, and peering over the head of the youth toward the shore they had just reached.

The native was the largest that Dudley had seen since coming to Siam. He was more than six feet in height, muscular and thin to emaciation. A broad, coarse sash was fastened around his waist, looped, and reached downward to his knees, below which, as has been already said, the legs and feet were bare. The same was true from his waist upward. His closely shaven head was without the least protection and he seemed to feel no discomfort

from the fervent rays that beat so pitilessly upon all who were not sheltered from them. The skin was much darker than Nughwa's, and the countenance was hard, drawn, wrinkled and forbidding. The forehead was ridged with seams, which showed also at the corners of the mouth, and the nose was thin and prominent.

That which would have struck anyone looking upon him for the first time was the eyes of the man. They were large, sunken and brilliantly black, suggesting a person suffering with a burning fever. They had a restless, flitting action such as is produced by an unbalanced brain. Their appearance raised the belief on the part of Dudley Mayson that the man was a lunatic, and consequently the most dangerous of individuals, since there was no means of telling what fancies or whims would control his conduct. He must have been without firearms in the first place, for all that was in sight was the rifle taken from his prisoner. In fact, he did not seem to carry any weapons at all, for the handle of the small knife sticking upward from the sash at his waist was that of the weapon he had extracted from the pocket of his captive while he slept.

The picture at the time these discoveries were made, was unique and striking. Dudley May-

son was seated in the prow of the dugout with his body encased to his waist in the flexible, soft-meshed sack, peeping through the scraggly opening in front of his face. The man had just driven the front of the boat against the soft bank and was holding the paddle suspended, as if debating some question with himself. His eyes were glancing here and there at something beyond the lad. While thus employed, he seemed suddenly to become aware that some one was surveying him through the peep-hole. He drew in his wandering gaze, and stared intently at the bright, hazel orbs which showed at the opening in the sack, and looked fixedly into his own cadaverous face.

Dudley would not have shrunk from trying to stare him "out of countenance," had he not been afraid of rousing the anger of the native. About the only rule to follow in dealing with an insane person is to convince him that you do not fear him, and are his master. In the circumstances this was impossible on the part of the lad, who gave over the effort when he saw he had become the target of those piercing eyes.

In the place of returning the look, Dudley shifted his head so as to gain a sight of his surroundings. The first glance confirmed his im-

pression that the craft was crossing the lagoon. They had turned up stream, and reached a portion where the width was considerably less than opposite the cocoa palm under which he had taken refuge from the glare of the sun. Shifting his head still farther, he found they had reached a small island which appeared to be about a hundred yards in length, and perhaps a fourth as wide in the broadest portion. Rather curiously it did not show any trees, but was covered with a species of thick undergrowth and exuberant grass, the latter being several feet in height, even at the water's edge.

All this was interesting, but something still more interesting caught the gaze of the unfortunate lad. Seemingly in the exact centre of the island, loomed the roof of a hut, little else of the rude structure being visible, because of the interlacing shrubbery and foliage that grew everywhere.

The conclusion was natural: this was the home of the native who had made him captive, and he was returning to it. It was one of the peculiarities of a healthy mind that, with the discovery of the primitive dwelling, a distinct thrill of hope — the strongest he had felt since his mishap—tingled through the heart of Dudley Mayson. For a few minutes, he was at a

loss to understand why such a rise of spirits should come to him, and thought it was the reaction which often cheers a strong minded person, when others see nothing but despair facing them. But it was more than that.

“It looks as if he has some other purpose in mind than my death,” thought Dudley, “or that if he means to take my life, he will not do so for some time to come. If his hatred led him to try to slay me, he would have done so while I lay asleep under the cocoa palm. If, like many savages, he wished to gain amusement out of my suffering, he could not have had a better chance than when he was paddling across the lagoon. But he spared me and I begin to think I may have an opportunity of escaping him altogether. Every few minutes gained are so much in my favour.”

Dudley was certainly an optimist, and it will be seen that the foundation for his pleasant hopefulness was that the delay was likely to give Nughwa time to come to his help. Sooner or later, he would return to the rendezvous on the shore of the lagoon, and upon discovering the absence of his young friend, would not throw away a minute in investigating the cause. The footprints in the soft earth by the water, the impressions made by the dugout against the

shore and other signs would tell him that his young American friend had been carried off by a barefooted native.

This would be a great point gained. Perhaps Dudley had too much confidence in the sagacity and woodcraft of Nughwa, for the youth was convinced he would do what he himself had been and still was unable to do, penetrate the whole scheme of his brother native. It was not impossible that he would identify him, and that he knew a good deal concerning the fellow. His home was between the missionary station and Ayuthia and was certain to be known to Nughwa, who must have often noticed it on his way between the two points, nor was it a stretch of the probabilities to believe the two men were acquaintances.

All this, I repeat, was good reasoning, and our young friend cannot be blamed for placing reliance upon it, but he, with his bright wits, saw also the weak links in the chain. Nughwa might not return to the halting place for an hour or more to come. If he were favoured with a sight of the white elephant, he was likely to be delayed still longer. That interval was sure to mean a good deal to Dudley Mayson.

It must not be thought that while these and similar fancies were thronging the brain of the

youth, his captor sat motionless, either staring at him or scrutinizing his surroundings. Like the hunter returning to his home after a long absence in the forest, the native was making a reconnaissance to learn whether it had been visited while he was away, and whether any hidden danger threatened him. Many a person who has neglected this simple precaution, has walked right into a fatal trap.

It must have been that the Siamese made a disquieting discovery, for his action pointed to that fact. Holding the long paddle in one hand, he uttered an exclamation which sounded as if of anger, and rose to his full height. He shot up quickly, reminding the boy of a jumping-jack, but poised himself so nicely that the dug-out was not disturbed. Standing thus erect, he gazed above the head of his prisoner into the undergrowth beyond. Then he stepped over the side of the boat into the water, which was only a few inches deep, but he sank to his ankles in the muddy bottom. The next moment he strode toward shore.

~ Dudley Mayson could hardly repress his excitement.

“If he leaves me with that gun, I will get hold of it somehow, and he’ll find things different when he comes back.”

In order to make use of the weapon, the youth must free himself of the bag. His repeated efforts to do so had failed, but the opening in the texture gave him new hope. He was sure he could enlarge it enough to thrust both hands through. That would be sufficient, for he would be able to make use of his gun. The Siamese had not interfered with the powder flask, bullet pouch and box of percussion caps which his prisoner carried, so that all he needed was a few minutes' absence on the part of his captor.

It was fortunate perhaps that the opportunity the lad desired was denied him. His captor had hardly placed one of his feet on the land, when he appeared to awaken to the mistake he was making. He stepped back, reached down and took the rifle from where it lay on the bottom and against the gunwale. Then he passed out of the water.

“Too bad,” thought Dudley with a sinking of the heart; “if you had only left that in my reach, you and I would have changed places.”

Even as it was, the youth was tempted to make a break for liberty. If he could free himself from the enveloping sheath, what was to prevent his pushing the boat out into the lagoon and making off? He surely could drive it faster through the water than the native could

swim, and would reach the mainland so far ahead of him that it would be easy to insure his own safety.

The fly in the ointment was the fear that the man would turn Dudley's own gun against him. Although he displayed no firearms of his own, he must know something of them. The island was so small that he would discover the flight of the lad with the boat before he could go far. If unable to overtake him, nothing was to prevent his bringing the American rifle to his shoulder and shooting its owner.

It was an alarming prospect, but Dudley determined to take the chances, desperate as they were. He first twisted his body around so as to get another sight of the little island against which the boat rested. He noted the tall grass, the thick undergrowth, and the top of the structure, consisting of horizontal poles upon which were piled boughs, dirt and leaves, but nothing was seen of the Siamese.

Bringing his hands in front of his face, Dudley seized the sides of the opening and jerked apart with all the strength he could exert. He tore the meshes slightly, but the sack had been woven from some fibrous substance, whose tenacity was like so many skeins of silk or strands of fine steel wire. It would have taken

the muscles of a Hercules to wrench them asunder. The slight yielding he had noticed must have been due to partial cutting when the opening was made.

All would have been easy had the native not taken away his knife. The youth might have turned his strong teeth to account, but he feared he had not the time in which to do it. Angered and impatient, he forced his right hand through to the elbow, but could make no room for the other.

“I wonder if I can use the paddle with one hand.”

And then, such is our curious make-up, he laughed silently as he thought of the figure he would cut, with his head and shoulders in the sack and one hand sticking through and wobbling a paddle. Moreover, with the window closed by his arm, he could make little or no use of his eyes. But he was not shaken in his purpose, and would have made the mad attempt had not a familiar, guttural exclamation at this juncture, notified him that the Siamese had returned.

CHAPTER XXII

CAPTOR AND CAPTIVE

IT IS not likely that the Siamese suspected the real purpose of Dudley Mayson, but supposed he was simply trying to free himself from the strangling sack for the sake of comfort, as he had tried to do more than once before. The man stooped down, fingered deftly at the fastenings, and then, with a single upward pull drew the network over the head of the youth who stood free.

“Ah! that is a great relief,” he sighed, “thank you.”

The hard expression never left the bronzed countenance. The man did not speak, but motioned his captive to walk in front of him. The latter now noticed for the first time a well-marked path leading toward the hut, which, therefore, must have been the home of the Siamese. Not daring to disobey, Dudley moved over the trail, sorely disappointed that he had been baffled on the threshold of his scheme and

yet half-disposed to believe he would have failed after all, had he been given the chance he coveted.

The distance traversed was brief. The hut was little more than a dozen feet square, the supporting columns being of bamboo, and the top covered by crossed limbs and branches, in which dirt was mixed, the whole forming a roof impervious to sun and rain, and elevated sufficiently to allow the native to stand erect. The structure had no floor except the earth, which had been tramped level, smooth and hard; and no window or opening, other than the broad entrance. There was not a particle of furniture, nor anything to show that a fire had ever been kindled inside. The home was of the most primitive character imaginable.

Dudley halted in front of the door and looked around for further directions. The man indicated that he was to pass within and he did so, walking to the other side and sitting down. His captor did the same, placing himself beside the entrance, with his legs bent in front, and the rifle lying beside him. Enough of the powerful sunlight entered to make everything within clearly observable.

“He does not mean to give me any chance to slip out,” was the thought of Dudley; “I

wonder whether he ever closes his eyes in sleep, or, if he sleeps, whether the tread of a cat would not awake him. Whatever he intends to do with me, he surely is in no haste about it."

The renewed assurance of this fact strengthened the hope of the youth, which had never left him for more than a short time. It was still a number of hours to nightfall, and who should say what might not happen in the interval? Surely Nughwa must soon learn of the mishap that had befallen his young friend and would bestir himself.

It is hard to imagine a more trying situation than that of waiting in suspense. Despite the discomforts of his situation in the dugout, there was action at all times around Dudley Mayson. He heard the dipping of the paddle, the motion of the boat, and was continually stirred by the feeling of expectancy. A change always impended, and he was kept wondering what was coming next, but the end of one phase of the experience was upon him. The hut was reached and he was seated on the bare ground, face to face with the terrible Siamese whom he believed to be of unsound mind.

The fellow withheld one trial from the young American, for, instead of fixing those burning eyes on him, he leaned his head back against

one of the bamboo supports, and gazed upward at the roof, as if in reverie or listening for an expected signal. Dudley, who stole furtive glances at him, saw his thin lips flutter, as if in prayer, and he thought he might be some Buddhist fanatic or devotee, communing with the being whom he worshipped.

But hardly was this belief formed, when the lad changed his theory and decided that the man was expecting some one. The probability set Dudley's speculations at work again, and there was no end to the fancies that thronged his brain. It is not worth while to attempt to give them, for he was astray and they were innumerable.

One source of suffering must not be forgotten. There are few parts of the world that are not infested by mosquitoes. Even in the Arctic regions during the brief, wet summers, they have tortured animals and men to death. You and I know a little of them from experience. They swarmed into the bamboo hut and gave their characteristic welcome to the young foreigner. Dudley slapped his face and hands, and scratched and dug different parts of his clothing through which they thrust their needle-like bills. It peculiarly maddened him to observe that they produced no perceptible effect

upon the Siamese. It was not because they did not give him attention, for they settled on his bare chest, arms and face, but not once did he disturb them. He let them bore to their hearts' content, and buzz away or stay as they chose. It may have been that the man looked upon them as a means of grace, to which it was his duty to submit without protest, for it is not to be believed that he did not feel their exasperating prickings, and his Buddhistic faith did not forbid him to destroy such pests.

However, we can become accustomed almost to everything, and the greater affliction overcame the smaller. The life of the youth was in peril, and even while fighting the pests, this fact was never out of his thoughts.

The burning eyes of the Siamese had remained closed for some minutes, and now and then the watchful Dudley Mayson noted the moving of his lips. Suddenly he straightened up, leaned forward and turned his head sideways, in the attitude of intense attention. Dudley did the same, but nothing beyond the usual sounds of the jungle fell on his ears.

“His hearing is better than mine, and he has noticed something.”

In perfect silence, he abruptly rose to his feet, but, instead of standing erect, bent his

head forward, keeping one ear toward the opening. After a very few seconds he stepped outside. Again Dudley Mayson was thrilled, for the man had left the rifle on the ground. The youth had but to leap forward and catch it up to make himself master of the situation; but, as if fate intended to amuse itself with him, when he was about to dash across the space, the gaunt figure appeared at the opening, reached out its hand, caught up the weapon and departed with it.

“He knows better than to trust me too far,” said the captive to himself; “if I could once get hold of my gun, I would bring this business to an end.”

He looked for the speedy return of the native, but when a quarter of an hour had passed, without his appearance, Dudley’s speculations took a new turn. If the man meant to stay away indefinitely, or for an hour longer, why should the prisoner remain in prison? What was to prevent his making a break for freedom?

The uncertainty was exasperating, and soon became unbearable. The lad felt as if he were acting a cowardly part in thus keeping his place when the open door was in front of him. It would not seem that the Siamese would feel any

increase of resentment toward him, if he failed to regain his freedom. At the same time, it might be that the native was cunningly tempting him to the effort.

Dudley rose from the ground, stepped softly to the opening, and peeped cautiously out. The tall grass and dense undergrowth were on every hand, and the eye could trace for a few steps the path by which he had come to the hut. There was no end of places in which the native could hide himself by merely stooping, and it was not to be supposed that he would keep in the trail.

The one test by which our young friend meant to decide whether his captor had left the island was the canoe. If that were absent, it was fair to assume he had departed for the mainland. And yet, had he done so, the lad might well ask himself in what way he could follow. He had no boat and was without the material with which to construct a raft. After his experience earlier in the day, nothing could tempt him to swim the lagoon.

The wildest scheme of all had taken shape in the brain of Dudley Mayson. He thought that if his captor were still on the island, but so far from the hut that he could not observe the actions of his prisoner, the latter could slip

among the undergrowth and hide until night, and then paddle to shore in the dugout. Of course, the Siamese on his return would know the boy was somewhere near and would begin a search for him. The extent of the island was so slight that he could easily tramp over every portion, but a vigilant youngster ought to be able to keep out of his way.

The scheme, as I have said, was a wild one, and it is impossible to believe it would have succeeded if tried. The native had been shrewd enough to keep possession of the two weapons of the lad, and it is not to be supposed, even if he failed to discover his hiding place, that he would leave the boat at his disposal. Except for his continual worrying and fretting, Dudley Mayson would not have formulated the plan.

Peeping here and there, he failed to catch sight of the man. Over the top of the grass and undergrowth, he saw the gleam of the lagoon, and the overflowing vegetation on both sides of the water, whose course he followed with his eye for a third of a mile, when a turn shut it out from farther view. The boat, however, had been moored so close in shore that it was hidden behind the tall grass.

Waiting but a short time, Dudley stepped through the opening, and walked rapidly along

the trail that led to the water's edge. It was not far, and, at the second turn, he saw the boat resting against the land precisely as it had been left when he stepped from it to land.

It followed, therefore, that the Siamese was still on the island. The lad could hardly shove off the craft and snatch up the paddle, when the other would descend upon him like a cyclone. Matters would be brought to a crisis, and every shadow of hope be gone.

Impressed with this belief, Dudley turned around and walked back to the hut. He expected at any moment to meet the Siamese coming after him, but when our young friend stood at the entrance of the structure once more, he had seen and heard nothing of the man.

Then the old scheme flashed up again. Now was his chance to steal off among the high grass and keep hidden until nightfall. Mad as the attempt would have been, Dudley would have tried it, but for the sudden reflection that it was utterly out of his power to conceal himself, while the sun was shining. No matter in what direction he moved, nor what care he used, he would leave traces which his enemy could follow as easily as if he were walking through clayey mud, where his shoes sank several inches with each step.

“How came I ever to think of such a thing?” was the lad’s disgusted exclamation; “my only chance will be at night, and I can feel mighty sure he won’t let me have it then.”

Disconsolate and doubting his own ability to reason, he walked back to his former place and once more sat on the ground. It looked to him as if he had reached the end of his resources, if indeed he had ever had any to reach, and all that was left for him to do was calmly to await the will of heaven.

By looking at his watch, he found that more than an hour and a half had passed since he had rested under the cocoa tree. He recalled that he had glanced at his timepiece, and noticed that it lacked a few minutes of one o’clock. It was now a quarter to three,—covering almost all the time Nughwa expected to be absent. If he had not already returned, he must do so very soon.

“He can’t do much without a boat, and I don’t know where he will get it; he may have one hidden along the lagoon, or perhaps he will build a raft, and pole out to the island, but he ought to be doing *something* pretty soon, if he expects ever to help me.”

It was no discredit to the good natured Dudley Mayson that now and then, a feeling of in-

dignation came over him, and he felt impatient toward his new friend. It certainly was strange that nothing was yet heard from him. It must be borne in mind, too, that unto few lads of his age do such crucial trials come as had overtaken the young American on his first visit to Siam. It would have been remarkable had he been able to keep his mental poise at all times.

Suddenly the opening of the hut was eclipsed. The Siamese had returned as silently as he went away. He stood erect for a moment under the eaves and then, as mute as ever, stepped inside and sat down in the same spot as before, laying the rifle on the ground where it was within instant reach. He looked across at the prisoner, and then, leaning his head back, seemed to give all his attention to the ceiling of his residence.

“Can it be he doesn’t know I have been outside? Where was he all the time I was standing in the door or hurrying over the path?”

“I only wish,” added Dudley to himself, after deep thought; “that you would now fall asleep and give me the chance I have been watching for so long; I think I could creep across this place and get hold of my gun without awaking you. Let the chance come, and if I don’t try it, my name isn’t Dud Mayson!”

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE HUT

THE minutes of that sultry, oppressive, tropical afternoon seemed interminable, and to Dudley Mayson the suspense at times became almost intolerable. There were moments when he felt he would go mad unless relief were granted him. The impulse to bound to his feet with a cry and leap upon his gaoler, or to dash through the door, could hardly be restrained. The Siamese sat in front of him, like one of his own heathen statues, hardly stirring, and giving no sign of life, except by the solemn closing and opening of his eyes.

Dudley had sat thus, as it seemed to him, for a half or three-fourths of an hour, when he drew out his watch and looked at it.

“It has stopped,” was his thought, when he saw that the time indicated was just six minutes later than when he consulted it before. He held the piece to his ear, and heard the ticking. It was running and had been running the

same as ever. He could hardly believe it, but it was true.

With his legs stretched out in front, while seated on the ground, he flung one ankle across the other and folded his arms. He had rested his back, like the man, against one of the thin bamboo rods which supported the structure. He slyly pressed back to see whether it would yield readily, for in his irritation he wished to push it clear, like Samson of old, and bring the roof tumbling about their heads. But the end had been shoved deep into the earth, and it held firm.

If one can become used to the bites of mosquitoes, Dudley became used to the pestiferous insects, whose marks were on every exposed portion of his body, and on some parts that were not exposed. Now and then, when a big fellow bored a little deeper than usual, the angry youth clapped his hand harder and generally with fatal results to the tormentor.

“I wonder how many mosquitoes there are in Siam,” was his grim thought; “about half of them must be in this hut, and I am doing more than my part in slaughtering them. Bite away!” he exclaimed, as he felt a sharp sting on his leg; “I can stand it as long as you.

“O-u-H!” he suddenly added, as he squelched the insect with a quick slap.

From some cause, which we cannot attempt to explain, the plague lessened with the passage of the minutes. Why the buzzing nuisances should take flight, at the height of their amusement, when the history of their species shows the rule to be the other way, was a mystery to Dudley Mayson and always will remain a mystery, for he never heard a theory that accounted for it; none the less, the mosquitoes began darting through the opening until, the lad did not feel or hear or see a solitary one.

“It must be,” he said with savage humour, “that they have had so many bites out of me there isn’t room left for one to get the point of his bill between the blotches; so they have gone to hunt elsewhere.”

The relief was great and even in his dreadful situation, Dudley appreciated it. He perforce kept up a certain amount of scratching, though all of us ought to know that does not abate the nuisance but oftentimes adds to it.

He now had time to think of more important matters. In truth, he had done little but think, since his startling awaking from sleep under the cocoa tree, but the turmoil in his brain left him in the same hopeless maze as be-

fore. He could not convince himself by any possible theory of the true explanation of the conduct of the Siamese, who, having conducted him to the bamboo hut, sat down and remained as dumb as a wooden idol.

A hint has been given of another wild hope that tantalized the American youth: that was to wait until his captor fell asleep, and then to seize his gun and make himself master of the situation. He reasoned that the man, like all living creatures, must sooner or later, yield to slumber. Inasmuch as he showed utter indifference to the stings of the mosquitoes, and the afternoon was oppressively hot, the conditions were favourable to his surrender to somnolence.

Manifestly the best way of throwing the man off his guard was for Dudley to feign sleep himself. Any one can make the pretence, but it does not always deceive. Still, it must be admitted that our young friend acquitted himself like a master of the art. Having folded his arms across his chest, he sat for a few minutes, with his eyes wandering around the interior of the hut. He looked up at each corner in turn, and noted the exuberance of climbing, interlocking vine that must have grown since the building of the structure; he observed a peculiar, knot-like formation of two vines, and

a number of truncated leaves; others short and broad and still others so attenuated that they reminded him of the Siamese himself; a clump of dirt on the other side of the entrance from the man looked as if hanging by a thread, and must fall at the first breath of wind; in several places the sunlight penetrated between the leaves to such an extent that grotesque shadows were thrown on the earthen floor; one of the wire-like twists showed a curious, wavy movement, as if agitated by outside causes, or as if it were endued with life itself. Dudley required only a few minutes' scrutiny to discover that it *did* have life, being some species of tiny serpent that had writhed its way to a point five or six feet above ground. However, the youth paid little heed to a thing like that, and brought his attention down to that mysterious creature facing him from the other side of the hut.

Dudley looked at the soles of the big naked feet, the skin as thick and tough as leather, and of about the same colour; the mahogany-like legs screened with hair; the bony, muscular chest, shaggy and ridged; the thin but excessively strong arms hanging at his side; the scrawny neck, the wrinkled face; the glimpse of teeth stained with betel-nut; the head shaved smooth; the arched and eagle-like nose; the sunken

gleaming eyes and lips, which occasionally fluttered, as if with prayer or possibly from a nervous affection.

All these had been noted before, and, fixing his gaze upon the narrow, projecting chin of the man, Dudley began winking with owl-like solemnity. The process grew slower and slower, and finally, after he had closed his eyes, he made apparently unavailing efforts to raise the lids, and then decided to let them remain as they were. His head gradually sagged over one shoulder, he breathed heavily, started once or twice, and then settled down as if for a long nap.

But Dudley was never wider awake. With his eyelids nearly closed, and with every semblance of drowsiness, he kept keen watch on the Siamese, who acted as if he had become more interested in him than before. This of itself was disquieting, for it might bode decisive action on his part. It was no effort, therefore, for the youth to hold command of his senses.

The native looked with piercing penetration, but did not change his posture. His head still lay slightly back against the bamboo column, and his incurved hands rested with the knuckles against the ground at the side of his hips. But by and by, he began to wink with the

drowsy sluggishness that Dudley himself had shown a short time previous.

“He can’t keep awake more than other folks,” was the thought of the latter; “I hope he hasn’t had a wink of sleep for a week; if so, my chance has come.”

The youth did not forget in his excitement to play his part. He had settled into the position of the sound sleeper, and while it cannot be said he snored, his respiration was audible, and had that deep regularity natural to those overcome with slumber.

Matters moved more tardily with the native. Although the drowsy winking went on, the big gleaming eyes were unveiled every time,—that is for fully ten minutes, and then the surrender came: they shut and remained closed.

“He is asleep at last,” was the delighted thought of Dudley, who lost none of these signs; “my chance has come.”

In his excitement, he was wise enough to repress his agitation and to guard against spoiling everything by eagerness or haste. He maintained his own posture for awhile, and then abruptly opened his eyes. As he did so, he scratched vigorously the back of one hand, as if that were the cause of his sudden wakefulness. This was for the benefit of the Siamese, should

he also bestir himself. But he gave no evidence of being disturbed.

It was not prudent for Dudley to start to creep across the floor until after more convincing proof of the other's slumber, or rather that it would continue, for he did not doubt its genuineness. He was sure the fellow slept lightly and would awaken from a slight cause.

The youth lifted the ankle from its resting place on the other ankle, and shifted the weight, as if for relief. Then he slightly changed his own attitude, as one naturally does when cramped in his limbs. Without looking directly at the man, he kept him under surveillance. He did not stir nor open his eyes.

The active brain of Dudley Mayson outlined what he believed would take place in the next few minutes. As stealthily as a cat stealing upon a mouse, he would creep across the room on his hands and knees, drawing steadily nearer the weapon, which lay at the side of the Siamese, who had taken it from him. Nearer and nearer he would crawl until he could by a quick movement, grasp the gun ere the man comprehended what was going on.

Suppose the native should awake before he reached that point? How would Dudley justify or explain what he was trying to do? He could

not, for it would be a case in which actions spoke louder than words.

The lad drew up his legs, then stretched his hands over his head and yawned. He leaned forward to begin his advance, but with a feeling of dismay, checked himself just in time.

That yawn was fatal: he overdid it, and, slight as was the noise, it overthrew his plan. A glance showed that while the Siamese had not moved, his eyes were wide open and he was looking as fixedly as before at his prisoner.

It was a thrilling disappointment, but the young man bore it like a hero. He was even able to smile, settle himself into an easy pose, and patiently wait for his captor to sink once more into slumber.

"I shouldn't have made the least noise," thought Dudley, with a pang of self-reproach; "I could have crossed the room without awakening him, and I had no excuse."

It never occurred to our young friend that possibly the Siamese had been feigning sleep like himself. Perhaps he did not, but the question is open to doubt.

It only remained for the work to be done over again, and the prisoner set out to do it with rare patience. He was determined this time to avoid the blunder just made. As soon

as the eyes of the native had remained closed, even for a short time, he would begin creeping toward him on hands and knees. Should he be so unfortunate as to betray himself—and he could see no reason for doing so—he would make a dash for the rifle, leap back with the muzzle in front, raising the hammer as he did so, and, if his enemy attacked him, he would shoot him down as if he were a tiger of the jungle.

Dudley was subsiding into his pretended sleep, when the Siamese bent his head forward with eyes wide open. It was his old attitude of keen attention, and indicated that he had heard something. The noise must have been slight, for with his senses keyed to the highest point, Dudley could detect nothing in the way of explanation. The murmur and hum of the jungle was like the voice of silence itself. Across the lagoon came the cries of the birds that were not asleep,—their discordance softened by the distance, and no harsher note intruded upon the stillness.

That the native heard something unusual could not be doubted, for he rose to his feet, taking care to pick up the gun, and passed out as before.

This time Dudley did not follow him. He

had settled that the plan which had come so near success was the only one that offered the least hope. All the others that had flitted through his brain were dismissed.

“He will soon come back and take his seat as before; it won’t be long before he will drop off to sleep; *then* I shall do something.”

It struck the prisoner that the true course was for him to remain where he was and make his pretended slumber appear the more genuine. Accordingly, he assumed an easier position, lying partly on one side, his head on his hand, whose elbow rested on the ground. And in that position, it grieves me to say, Dudley Mayson did actually fall asleep.

The Siamese was not absent more than ten or fifteen minutes. He seemed to have satisfied himself that no cause existed for alarm, and, stepping within the hut, resumed his old seat with the weapon lying beside him. As he did so, he glanced across at the lad, and at the same moment an expression flitted across his bronzed countenance that was like the ghost of a smile.

CHAPTER XXIV

“MUSIC HATH CHARMS”

NO ONE can analyze the stuff of which dreams are made. It has been said many times that no thought comes to a person in sleep which has not previously visited him while awake. This is not true, as many of us know from our own experience. Some of our fancies when unconscious bear no resemblance to any of our waking thoughts. Two colours when blended will sometimes produce a colour unlike either. So it must be that when two totally different thoughts mingle, a third thought is evolved bearing no resemblance to the foundation or elemental thoughts.

The other remarkable qualities of dreams may be mentioned. The first is that the emotion of wonder is always absent. No matter how incongruous the fancies, such as conversing with persons long dead, or the doing of impossible feats, all are accepted as a matter of course and no astonishment is produced.

Another wonderful fact is the brief interval in which the events of weeks, months and even years are often comprehended. A man has dreamed of embarking on an ocean steamer, of being caught in a furious storm, of the sinking of the vessel, while vainly trying to weather the gale, and of striking the bottom of the sea and being awakened by the shock,—and all this has taken place in the interval between the slipping of the chair in which he is dozing and its fall to the floor.

To Dudley Mayson, as he lay stretched out in the bamboo hut on the little tropical island, there came a bewildering riot of fancy. From the whirl and turning and overturning of imaginings, too fantastic to be described, the sensation came to him of floating through the air at an immense height above the earth. Thus drifting in the depths of ether, there gradually came to him the sound of music,—soft, dreamy, entralling and too heavenly to be born of earth. At first, it was faint and seemingly miles away. Gradually it drew nearer, until it filled the air about him, and then suffused his very soul, taking full possession, while he resigned himself to the spell, the like of which he had never known.

Imperceptibly to himself his senses gradually

returned, until as he lay on the hard ground he realized his situation. He saw the Siamese seated across the space, his head bowed in his hands, while he leaned forward in the attitude of listening. The sunlight still stole through the interlacing vines and the entrance, but it was more subdued and he knew the long afternoon was drawing to a close and twilight was at hand.

But with this return of consciousness, the youth became aware that the music of his sleeping moments was still in the air and floating through his brain and it produced a wonderful effect upon him.

In the first place, there was a dim, vague impression that somewhere and at some time—neither of which could be recalled—he had heard the voice before it visited him in his dreams and stayed with him when awake. Its depth and sweetness, united with the impressive circumstances, gave it a supernatural nature. He reclined without moving, fearful that if he stirred, he would dissolve the enthralling spell.

But as the mystified brain clarified several truths impressed themselves upon him. He was not listening to the voice of a man or woman, but to that of a child, which was singing in the Siamese tongue. The exquisite harmony

was of the earth, though to his rapt sense he believed for a time it was supernatural. The words were strange to him, and he knew the child was singing one of those weird Buddhist songs or hymns, which seem to be set in the minor key, and heard in the conditions named, could not fail to produce an effect beyond the power of analysis.

Another fact was that the voice was drawing slowly but unmistakably toward the little island. The music did not lose its entrancing charm, but it was surely approaching the hut in which he lay. Becoming the master of his senses, the youth observed that his Siamese companion was more profoundly affected by the song than he. Removing his hands from before his face, he stared at the door as if awaiting the coming of an apparition. Had he been cast in bronze, he could not have sat more rigid and motionless.

Yielding to an impulse which he himself did not understand, Dudley Mayson now rose to his feet and walked to the opening. In doing so, he passed the native so near that he could have touched him with his hand. The latter did not stir nor notice him. He was listening to the music and cared for naught else.

Reaching the open air, our young friend was

able partially to shake off the spell that had held his senses captive. This was more readily done, because at the same moment the singing ceased. He had noted the direction, however, and moved over the path toward the point where the Siamese had drawn his dugout up the bank. When he was clear of the tall grass and undergrowth, he saw that a second boat, similar to the first, lay against the shore and three persons had just stepped from it.

Through the gathering gloom, he instantly recognized one of these as his friend Nughwa, who was just drawing the boat far enough up the bank to prevent its being swept away by the sluggish current. The second man was a Caucasian, who as he stood awaiting the will of the native, held a girl by the hand. Dudley did not identify either.

Halting a few paces distant, the astonished youth gazed at them in silence, uncertain whether he ought to speak or wait for one of them to address him.

The position of the man and girl was such that their faces were turned partly away from the youth, and Nughwa was the first to observe him.

“Did you grow tired of waiting for me?”

asked the native, as if he saw nothing unusual in the circumstances.

"Yes, Nughwa, I had about given up hope; why did you—"

Just then, the girl turned her head, stared for an instant, and, snatching her hand from that of the man, dashed toward the lad.

"Dud! Dud! O, my own darling brother!"

She leaped from the ground, and, flinging her arms about his neck, hugged him fervently.

As soon as he could rally, he asked:

"Fannie! is it really you? How you have grown!"

"And so have you," she replied, releasing herself, standing back and gazing wonderingly at him; "why you are almost a man. *Is it really you, Dud?*"

"I am just as much Dud as you are Fannie; helloa, Pop; we mustn't forget you!"

The man had strode forward, halting for a moment, until the brother and sister were through their first burst of emotion. He now caught the sturdy youth in his arms, kissed his cheek and murmured in a tremulous voice:

"My boy! my boy! thank God! Heaven be praised for all its mercies!"

He tried to say more, but broke down and wept. Dudley's head was on his shoulder and

feeling that he had mastered himself, he straightened up.

“Come, Pop, this won’t do; just look at me—”

And then the brave fellow went all to pieces and for a minute or two neither spoke. The parent was the first to rally, and smiling through his tears, said:

“I am looking at you, Dud, though I hardly should have known you had we met elsewhere; surely you are as tall as I.”

“And you have more beard than when you left home, and,” added the happy lad, “I see a few gray hairs about your temples.”

“Yes; there are some; one grows old fast in this country.”

“And what of mother?” asked the son with a thrill of misgiving.

“We left her well and in the best of spirits only a short time ago; she is looking for you and your meeting is near at hand.”

Fannie who had yielded her place to her parent would not be denied any longer. She came forward and took one of her brother’s hands.

“Are you glad to see us, Dud?”

“What a question! I won’t answer it; I look as if I were glad, don’t I?”

“Well, if you *are* glad, give me another of your old-fashioned hugs.”

He placed his arms about her and pressed her so fervently to his heart that she protested.

“I must have a chance to breathe, Dud, or you won’t have any sister.”

The lad now looked about him.

“What’s become of Nughwa?”

“He went into the hut to see Bara,” answered the father.

“Is Bara the name of the man who had charge of me?”

“Yes; he and Nughwa are old acquaintances.”

“And do you know Bara?”

“Very well,—poor fellow!”

“Why do you call him ‘poor fellow’?”

“He is of unsound mind,—as crazy as a loon, as we used to say at home.”

“His eyes have such a strange look that I thought he must be a lunatic; I tell you, Pop, he wasn’t the most pleasant company in the world.”

“While we are waiting for Nughwa, tell us about your experience with him, Dud.”

Standing thus on the water’s edge, the young man summarized the occurrences of the afternoon. His father listened silently, but Fannie

persisted in caressing one of the hands of her brother and uttering many words of sympathy.

“You say you know this man, Pop; tell me something of him.”

“His story is a pathetic one. He was one of my first converts and was an earnest Christian; he joined my little flock months before Nughwa. He was so intense in his new faith, that it was hard for me to restrain him at times from doing violence to those who would not believe as he did.

“Like Nughwa he was an elephant-catcher, and one of the best in Siam. He and Nughwa were hunting animals at one time far north in the Laos country, when the two had the narrowest escape of their lives. Nughwa was laid up several months from his injuries, while for weeks we did not think Bara would live from one day to another. By and by, he began to rally and gain strength, but I saw he had received a hurt to his head which affected his brain: he was different from the Bara who went forth from the station to hunt wild elephants.

“As he improved, he grew moody and reserved. I tried to draw him out, but, though he did not show any open dislike toward me, I could not help seeing his feelings had changed. The truth came out one day. He believed that

the injury he had received, as well as his failure on his last hunt were the punishment for having renounced Buddhism. I argued with him, but nothing could change this belief. He assured me he would never harm me or any of mine, but would show no mercy to other Christians."

"What of Nughwa?"

"I should have mentioned him, for he is the only one toward whom Bara seems to feel any thing resembling friendship. It is because of that that Nughwa has gone into the hut to talk with him."

"Suppose he had known I was your son?"

"I do not think he would have harmed you, but it was not in your power to show him our relationship."

"There is one thing I do not understand, Pop, or rather several of them. When Nughwa left me to take an observation from a near-by hill, he gave two hours as the limit of his absence, and yet he has been away three times as long at the least."

"He has been to Wahta-Shat and back again. He went after Fannie and me. You can see that he has not thrown away any time."

"I suppose not, but why did he go to the station and leave me in the hands of a crazy man, for he must have known it?"

“He came back to the place where he left you before the two hours had gone by; for he says he heard you fire your gun, and some time later he reproached himself that he had not gone to you without delay. He made haste to do so, and it did not take him long to learn what had happened. Bara had made a prisoner of you, no doubt while you were sleeping, and had taken you to this island.”

“How could Nughwa know where he took me?”

“Because he knew where the devotee made his home. Nughwa had been on the island and visited him more than once.”

“Why did he not hasten to follow me?”

“For the best of reasons; he has no boat and it is too dangerous to swim in the lagoon, though he might have built a raft. You will say that he could have called to Bara from the mainland and told him he had made a prisoner of the son of the missionary, but Bara would not have believed him, for he never heard that I had any son. He would have thought Nughwa was trying to play a trick on him and ended the matter by instantly slaying you before Nughwa could get near enough to prevent. So he turned and hurried to the station to bring Fannie and myself.”

CHAPTER XXV

HEADING UP STREAM

DUDLEY MAYSON was inquisitive and the explanations thus far, as given by his father, did not satisfy him.

“What reason had Nughwa, when he left me to be gone several hours, for believing he would find me alive on his return?”

“Did Bara say any words to you in English?” asked the parent in turn.

“Not one; I did not suppose he understood a word of our language?”

“He has an imperfect knowledge; I wonder that he did not show it; one of the phases of his insanity is not to seek the death of a Christian until he has tried to win him to Buddhism; he would have hard work, I suppose, in your case,” said the missionary with a smile, “but Nughwa knew he would make the effort. That meant delay, for our friend counted upon your wisdom, when the test came, of dallying with him. He was hopeful that Bara would not

make the attempt before night, or at least for some hours, or if made, that the crisis would be fought off. It looks as if Nughwa was right in this supposition."

"Then I suppose that my captor gave a good deal of his time to meditation upon the task he had in mind; for I can't understand why he should have been silent so long, unless that was his reason."

"Undoubtedly it was."

"You have twice said that when Nughwa hurried to the station, it was to bring you and Fannie back with him: why was *she* included?" asked Dudley, giving his sister a sly squeeze.

"Music has an unaccountable influence over Bara; we found that out when he was convalescing at the station, and none could affect him so deeply as Fannie with her simple Siamese hymns. As soon as we came in sight of the island, she began singing."

"I see it all now," said the youth, deeply impressed; "it was *her* voice that awoke me from sleep, but it was some time before I could comprehend what it meant."

"And it moved Bara?"

"Profoundly; when I opened my eyes and looked across the hut, he sat like one entranced. I got up and walked out and he neither stirred

nor spoke; he was more under the spell than I and did not recover as I did. Fannie," added her brother, pinching her cheek, "you have a pretty fair voice, and you must let me hear it again."

"You shall have plenty of opportunity, but not now," said the parent; "it has done its work; it is time Nughwa joined us."

During the conversation, the murmur of words was heard in the hut, and Nughwa now appeared bearing the rifle of Dudley Mayson in one hand. As he came forward, he drew the knife from his sash and handed it to the youth.

"Everything is right; we can leave without waiting longer."

"Would it be wise for me to go in to see Bara?" asked the missionary.

Nughwa was thoughtful a minute, and then shook his head.

"I think not; he is a strange man; let us wait no longer."

The guide stepped to the boat and shoved it free of the land. Then the missionary seated himself at the stern, Dudley and Fannie near the bow, while Nughwa sat in the middle, and picked up the paddle, similar to that which had been used by Bara. The combined weight sank the craft almost to the gunwales.

“You see, Dud, why we did not bring your mother,” remarked his father; “as it is, we have a bigger load than usual. Besides she thought it best to stay with the sick ones, who, I am glad to say are doing well.”

Nughwa headed the craft up stream, displaying much expertness in its management. It has been said that the width and depth of the lagoon made the current sluggish. Indeed, at times, it was hard to note any movement of the water at all; but, as one ascended the current narrowed and the flow became more perceptible.

Twilight is always of brief duration in the tropics, and it had begun when our friends pushed off from the island. While the Siamese and missionary faced the way they were going, the children looked toward the island. The distance passed was brief, when Fannie said in an undertone:

“Look!”

She pointed down stream, and all eyes were turned that way, but Nughwa instantly withdrew his gaze, and gave his attention to paddling. The three saw the devotee, who had come down to the margin of the lagoon, where he was standing, like a statue, with arms folded and his eyes evidently fixed on the craft that was bearing the four persons away.

Nughwa slackened the speed of the boat, which was already slow, and said:

“Will not the little girl sing?”

Fannie looked to her father for permission and he nodded his head. The same soft, low and wonderfully sweet tones floated across the water. The exquisite music cannot be described, the girl herself entering into the spirit of the time, place and circumstances. Even Nughwa was affected. He ceased swaying the paddle, and held it partly suspended with the water trickling from the blade.

The feelings of the man on the island must have been stirred to their depths, though the slightest variation of his pose could not be seen, and the obscurity prevented a clear view of his swarthy countenance.

By and by, Nughwa gently resumed paddling. The form on the island grew dim and shadowy and finally faded away in the gloom. The voice of the girl ceased, and for several minutes no one spoke. Then the native dipped and swayed the blade with more vigour, for the stream was narrowing and the strength of the current increasing. It was several minutes before any one spoke. Dudley pressed the palm of his sister, and as he did so, felt a warm tear fall upon the back of his hand. He made no comment,

and their father was the first to break the stillness which would have been perfect, but for the eternal voice of the jungle on either hand.

“Nughwa, did you make Bara believe it was my son whom he made prisoner?”

“I am not sure of that; he listened for some time to my talk, but did not seem able to understand why you should have come so great a distance, and brought one child and left the other. Our people you know think more of their boys than of the girls, and it appeared to him it ought to have been the other way.”

“What was his purpose regarding Dud?”

“When night came he meant to make him understand he must accept the religion of Buddha or die.”

“As Mohammed did centuries ago with Islamism; did he tell you why he waited until night?”

“No, but he must have thought the hour of darkness would be more favourable.”

“You talked with him for some time.”

“Not much else of account was said; he urged me to become a Buddhist.”

“And what did you say to *him*?”

“Nothing on that subject,” was the reply of the sensible fellow; “for what can one gain by trying to persuade a crazy man to believe differ-

ently from how he believes? You make him angry, and he thinks more strongly his way than before. Bara has not eaten for six days."

"Poor fellow! his chief business seems to be fasting. And to think, Dud, how plentiful food is all around him! We have fifty varieties of bananas alone in Siam."

"And no end to other fruits; I hope for Bara's sake he is through with fasting."

"More than likely he is not half-finished; I have known him to let food alone for twenty days. I am glad of one thing," said the missionary, "he has better sense than to inflict tortures, other than starvation, upon himself. Some of these wretched idolators give themselves shocking injuries."

Meanwhile, Nughwa plied the paddle with the smooth regularity of a steam engine. The brown, muscular arms seemed never to tire and the dugout moved steadily up stream. Several times the missionary insisted upon taking his turn, and even Dudley was eager to show he was not ignorant of the art, but Nughwa shook his head.

"When I am tired I will ask you to give help."

"The trouble about that is that you never

seem to grow tired," said the missionary; "at least you won't confess it."

Night had closed in, and the sky was without a cloud. The stars shone with a splendour unknown in the temperate zones, and the air seemed to throb and scintillate with the brilliant rays. When the little boat passed near either shore, great fern leaves, of the size of umbrellas, lapped over them, while the woods on either hand wore their impenetrable garb of darkness. From the depths of the jungle, issued the myriad voices, making a din that is indescribable. There seems to be no limit to the sights, sounds and productions of the tropical world. In the deep gloom, the millions of points of fire caused by lightning bugs, flashed out, quickly subsiding into darkness again—the exhibition being of the remarkable nature already described.

Under the even impulse of the paddle, brother and sister exchanged experiences. Six years may not mean much to us older folks, but it is a mighty big span in the lives of boys and girls. Fannie had kept up a fitful correspondence with several playmates, though the letters were anything but regular in passing to and fro, and there was no end to the questions she asked concerning the writers. Dudley had taken pains to prime himself with information which

delighted her. Most of her friends had sent presents which were in the luggage that had arrived that day from Ayuthia, for the two carriers seemed to have escaped all the trials and trouble that befell the young man.

Fannie, on her part, told Dudley of their daily life in this distant part of the world. It was interesting to him, since it concerned those whom he loved with the overflowing affection of his nature. The father sat silent and listening during their conversation, for in the stillness he could hear all that was spoken. A luminous peace filled his heart, for unto him had come mercies which he felt could not be increased. Above, below, around and suffusing all, was the consciousness of the approbation of his heavenly Father, and none can comprehend *that*, unless he has received it.

Nughwa was happy also, but he could not forget that a certain responsibility rested on his shoulders. It was his duty to conduct this little party to the missionary station, and until that was done, he had no right to give his thoughts to anything else. Had any one paid attention to him, he would have seen that his glances were continually flitting from bank to bank, and up stream. He gave no attention to the rear, be-

cause no danger was to be feared from that direction.

Suddenly he ceased paddling and uttered a low "*Sh!*"

The younger ones checked their words, and, like their parent, looked at the guide for an explanation of the warning. He gave no reply, but they observed he was looking at something toward the right bank, some twenty yards away. A growl sounded across the slight space, and Nughwa quickly laid his paddle in the bottom of the boat. He took up Dudley's rifle and handed it to the missionary, who had not brought any weapon with him, and then grasped his own.

"Can you see anything?" whispered Dudley in the ear of his sister.

"Yes," she answered in the same guarded voice; "there it is!"

She indicated the direction with her finger. Under the overhanging limbs along shore glowed two orbs, with a phosphorescence such as is seen in the feline species. Some wild beast was staring out upon the boat and its occupants, as if seeking the meaning of what he saw.

Since the Siamese had ceased paddling, the dugout began drifting with the current. A

splash was heard, proving that the animal had entered the water.

“He means to attack us,” said the missionary.

“Perhaps, but wait till he comes nearer.”

The greenish glitter dropped lower, as the creature sank into the stream, and swam out into the current. Both men cocked their guns, and Dudley placed a loving arm around his sister, as if to protect her from the threatened danger.

“It is a tiger,” said Nughwa, “wait till he is close to the boat; then we will aim at his forehead between the eyes.”

The moment the head came from under the shadows, the occupants saw it quite plainly in the star-gleam. The small ears standing erect, and the shining eyes, showed the outlines of a head so large as to prove the animal to be of unusual size.

At this critical moment, it was noticed that the tiger was not directly approaching the boat. There may have been something in the appearance of the craft and those in it that he did not understand, and every animal fears that which is not comprehended by him. Be that as it may, he swerved in his course, and crossed the stream twenty feet above the prow of the dug-

out. The fan-like wake that spread out behind his head was plainly shown in the glow of the stars, and a few minutes later, he passed from sight in the gloom of the other bank, where he was heard to leave the water and pass on into the jungle beyond.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOME AT LAST

THE course being open once more, Nughwa resumed paddling and drove the boat faster than at any time since leaving the island. Brother and sister resumed their talk, but at the suggestion of the guide, spoke in low tones.

“I don’t think we are likely to draw attention,” he explained, “but there is no need to run the risk.”

No interruption occurred until they had gone more than a mile. The stream, having narrowed to about a hundred yards in width, did not seem to increase or diminish, but the native maintained his alertness, as if he knew that peril of some sort impended every minute.

“Can you tell what creatures make all these strange noises?” asked Dudley of his sister, when they had sat awhile in silence.

“No; there are so many that I don’t believe Nughwa or even mother can.”

“Do you rank her as the equal of him?”

“No one knows more of Siam than she; father says she is a wonder.”

“She always was,” said the proud son.

“I have even heard Nughwa ask her about certain cries heard at night, and she was always able to tell him—there! that is a trumpeter-beetle!” exclaimed the girl as a peculiar rattling note fell upon their ears; “there is no end to the night birds, and now and then some wild animal adds his voice to the racket.”

“Helloa! Nughwa has discovered something else,” whispered the brother, who noticed that the Siamese had again ceased swaying the paddle.

“And I know what it is,” said Fannie, with no little pride.

“Then you know more than I do, which isn’t saying much; what is the cause?”

“Elephants; don’t you hear them?”

The crashing on the right sounded as if made by a park of artillery plunging through the jungle.

“They are coming down to drink; they will be in sight in a minute.”

Knowing where they would leave the forest, Nughwa drove the canoe down stream, to remove it from the path of the bulky animals.

The crashing tread lasted a few minutes, and then a splashing showed that the beasts had entered the water. They kept so near shore that only a vague sight was caught of them.

“How many are there?” asked Dudley.

“*Three.*”

No one except the two understood the significance of this reply. Not knowing whether the native wished their secret to become known, the youth veiled his question:

“Do you think we have seen them before?”

“I shall find out.”

He paddled a little way down stream and ran the prow of the boat under the bank.

“I will be gone only a short time,” he explained to his friends, “wait here till I come back; I must learn something about those animals.”

He kept his word and returned at the end of a few minutes.

“They are all of a dark colour,” he explained, lifting the paddle and guiding the boat as close to the farther bank as he could. He feared the animals would place themselves in the stream so that it would be hard and perhaps dangerous work to attempt to pass them. His promptness averted this difficulty, and, when he brought the dugout into the middle of the current again, it

was a safe distance above the elephants which were frolicking and sporting in the water, as all had seen them do before.

“Nughwa,” said the missionary, when matters had settled; “I noticed that you said the three elephants which you saw were all of a natural colour: how came you to say that?”

There was no reason for keeping the secret, and Nughwa answered:

“On our way through the jungle, we came upon three elephants, and one of them was of a white colour; I thought he might be one of these three.”

“You astonish me; in all the time that I have lived in Siam, I have never seen one of those albinos except in the royal quarters at Bangkok, and now, my son no more than fairly enters the jungle, when he runs against one.”

“And Nughwa says he is the finest specimen he ever saw,” said Dudley.

“And that is true; the three came in this direction, but turned to the north some miles back and must be a long way off.”

“Did you try to capture him?”

“We had not the means of doing so; we shall wait till we get home and then Dudley and I will make the start with Wahrida.”

"I was not aware that I had given Dud permission," said his father almost curtly.

"It shall be just as you say, Pop," the lad hastened to add; "I should dearly love to go with Nughwa, but I shall not do so if it is against your wishes."

"Spoken by a true son! My objections are removed, though I can't say I fancy the plan of having you leave almost as soon as you come under our roof."

"We may wait two or three weeks."

"I can see that that will never do; a few days are enough to take the animal many miles away, and so far into the jungle that it will be almost impossible to find him again."

"We had no trouble in following the trail of the three."

"Because the spoor was fresh, but it will soon be crossed by others, and there is no way of distinguishing them: am I right, Nughwa?"

"You are; there is no chance of success unless we begin the hunt to-morrow."

"Well, that being so, I will compromise matters with Dud; he has *my* consent, but before he leaves, he must get that of his mother. If she is willing, I shall make no objections."

"We can fix it with her," whispered Fannie; "I'll coax like everything and you'll coax

harder than that, and she is the best mother that ever lived, so *that* settles it."

"Don't you think the prize is worth trying for, Pop?"

"It certainly is; if you can capture such a fine white elephant as you say this one is, and are able to get him to Bangkok, the king will pay you a big price for him. I must say, however, that I haven't the slightest hope you will succeed."

"I do not see why we haven't a fair chance; Nughwa has captured lots of elephants, and I suppose that one with a partly white skin isn't any harder to catch than the others."

"It isn't that, but if this one has been near us, it is quite likely others have seen him, and they will leave nothing undone to get ahead of you. There will be only two of you, and, if you capture him, a stronger company of hunters will take him from you. It is a big job, too, to take him down the Meinam on a raft to Bangkok."

"We have only to capture him," said Nughwa, who naturally was deeply interested in the matter; "after that, it will be easy enough, for I can get all the help I want."

"Why not take the help with you into the jungle?"

“If I did that, I should have to divide the price among all who went with me; if I wait till I have captured the elephant, I shall have to pay them wages only.”

“Nughwa,” said the missionary with a laugh, “you are a Yankee in everything except birth.”

“I think you should be one of the hunters,” replied the native.

“I should enjoy the sport and I thank you for the invitation, but you are liable to be gone for a week and perhaps for two or three weeks; I could never consent to leave my people for so long a time, especially when one or two are ill. Nughwa’s plan can’t be improved; Dud and he will be the hunters, and, if you find need of helpers, all you have to do is to hire them for the liberal wages I know you would be glad to pay. I need not remind you, Dud and Fannie, that you mustn’t drop a hint of this to any one except your mother. If it should become known that a white elephant has been seen within a score of miles of the station, I fear there will be a stampede of most of my people into the jungle.”

“We shall take care that they learn nothing from us,” was the assurance of Nughwa.

Less than half an hour later, the native ran

the boat against the bank, and said the journey for the time was at an end.

“Have we reached home?” asked the astonished Dudley, rising to his feet, and helping his sister to land.

“Pretty nearly; we shall soon be there.”

A number of twinkling lights showed the presence of dwellings, but the darkness did not permit a clear view. The land was considerably elevated, and it had been hard work for the last hour or so for Nughwa to drive the boat against the current.

Hardly had they stepped ashore, when a woman hurried from the gloom toward them. Before she was recognized, she asked in a tremulous voice:

“Where is Dudley? Why didn’t you bring him with you?”

“Here he is, mother,” called Fannie with a laugh; “so tall that you don’t know him.”

“Can that be you, my own, darling son?”

The next instant, when he had caught her in his strong arms, all doubt as to his identity vanished. Amid the greetings and laughter and general joy, Nughwa pulled the boat up the bank, and quietly went to his own home in the missionary settlement.

With his arm interlocked in his mother’s, and

Fannie nestling on the other side under his wing, as may be said, and the father slightly in advance, the happy family made their way to their home. Several persons were met, some of whom paused and looked wonderingly at the stranger, as dimly revealed in the lights from the dwellings. The missionary greeted all kindly, and, when one tall native halted in front of the party, the good man introduced him to the youth whom he was proud to call his son. The Siamese, who bore a name unpronounceable to Dudley, gravely shook his hand, and said in broken English that he was glad to know him and hoped he would stay at Wahta-Shat for ever.

“That’s a pretty good while,” remarked Dudley with a laugh as the walk was resumed, “but I don’t intend you shall get rid of me for some time yet.”

The blinking lights revealed to the observant youth that the dwellings of the missionary station were arranged in two rows facing each other, with a street some fifty feet in width between. When he had gone a little farther, he noticed that all seemed to be standing on stilts. They were constructed of bamboo, probably the most useful tree that grows in tropical countries, and between the buildings, as he after-

ward discovered, were small spaces of cultivated land. In the centre of the settlement was a neat chapel for worship. The whole place showed the striking contrast between the thrift of the little Christian community and the indolence to be seen in most of the towns of Farther India.

Dudley Mayson followed his relatives into their home, the interior of which was lighted by lamps of vegetable oil. In the full glow, he had to submit to the loving inspection of his mother, whose delight was irrepressible at finding that her boy, whom she had not seen for years, was really with her. A meal was waiting, and, for the first time in two days, the youth partook of well-broiled fish. This was the only solid food, the rest consisting of several varieties of fruit.

Where everything was so new and strange, Dudley was in a state of continual wonderment. They were waited upon by a comely female servant, whose modesty and prompt obedience would have made her a prize in any part of the world. Three or four cats were purring under the bamboo chairs and tables, and Dudley laughed when he found that none of them possessed a tail. He was told that they had not been robbed of the appendages, but belonged to

a numerous feline class of Siam which have never, as long as men can remember, been the owners of such ornaments.

“And why do all the houses stand so high?” he asked, when something like quiet had come to the household.

“I should think you would know that without asking,” was the reply of Fannie; “it is to keep out the serpents and many kinds of reptiles. Some of them like to creep into the house, but I have never been able to like them, although I have tried to.”

“Ugh! I hate all kinds of serpents; I saw some on my way here, and I make it a rule to kill them whenever I have the chance.”

“It seems to be the general feeling, though I have never been able to share it,” said the missionary; “it won’t take you long, however, to become accustomed to this life, which you will find very different from life in dear America.”

The family sat in loving converse until the hour was well advanced, when they knelt around the family altar, and the father offered his thanks to the merciful One who had brought about this reunion after so many years and so many thousand miles of separation. When he prayed for a continuance of divine care, he

asked the favour of heaven, if such was its will, upon the enterprise in which the son was soon to engage, and the mother naturally could not understand the meaning of such a peculiar petition.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE NIGHT BEFORE

WHEN the devotions of the evening were ended, Mrs. Mayson gently asked of her husband:

“What did you mean by speaking in your prayer of some enterprise in which Dudley expects to take part?”

“I declare I ought to have told you that,” was the innocent response; “when he and Nughwa were on their way from Ayuthia they saw a white elephant in the jungle; the chance of capturing such a prize is too good to be thrown away.”

“When do they wish to start on the hunt?”

“You understand the value of time; the animal is working northward, and if they wait too long, they will lose a chance which does not often come to a hunter.”

“And in this matter, does not my good husband assume more than he has a right to assume, when he takes my consent for granted?”

“The opposite belief would be an assumption. Did mother ever refuse the wish of her boy when such wish was a sensible one?”

“I have not admitted that Dudley’s wish is sensible.”

“Not in words, but neither he nor I can doubt it.”

As may be supposed, Dudley and Fannie were listening with rapt interest. They saw that the moment had not yet come for persuasion on their part.

“It is a trial for me to have him leave for an indefinite time after he has been with us only a few hours; why, I have not yet become accustomed to his stature and change of looks.”

“The trial is as great to me as to you. When he and Nughwa told me of their plan, I was inclined to refuse, but finally left it to you. If you say no, that ends it.”

Dudley rose from his chair, and, crossing the room, placed his arm around the neck of his mother and kissed her but did not speak. Actions sometimes are more eloquent than words. Fannie wanted to do something, but was not clear in her mind what it should be, so she did nothing except to look wistful and pleading.

Returning the caress of her son, the mother said, in a slightly tremulous voice:

“You may go with Nughwa, Dudley.”

“Thank you, mother; you couldn’t be any better or kinder if you tried. I feel hopeful of capturing the prize, and if we do, my share of the profits shall go to you and father.”

“You are counting your chickens before they are hatched,” said the latter, who could not help sharing the glowing enthusiasm of his boy, though, as he had shown, his hope of success was by no means as strong as that of the youth.

“And what is the harm of doing that?”

“None, except it is apt to make one’s disappointment the keener.”

“If we fail, I shall have had a mighty good time, for I can think of nothing finer than hunting elephants. What will you do with the fortune, Pop?”

“I haven’t received any fortune yet, and the prospect of receiving it is hazy.”

“I won’t deny that, but, if we *are* successful, won’t it be splendid? It will make us all rich.”

“Yes,” was the characteristic response; “it will help me in doing my Master’s work.”

A faint tapping was heard on the door which, for the sake of greater secrecy, was closed. When it opened, the dark, smiling face of Nughwa appeared. Each knew what had brought him thither and he was always wel-

come. He seated himself in the group and modulated his voice, so that it was impossible for any eavesdropper to overhear the words. Eavesdropping was not common at Wahta-Shat, but the presence of the young foreigner at the station may have brought curious ones around the door. Many of these understood the English tongue well enough to catch the meaning of the words that might fall on their ears.

The sagacious native saw that the subject which was on his mind was under discussion, and he needed no one to tell him how the mother felt in the matter.

“Have you spoken to Atrera?” asked the missionary, mentioning the name of the wife of the Siamese.

“Ah, no,” he replied with a grin, “why should I tell her of this grand plan? She would be so filled with it that she could not keep the secret, though she would try hard, and then we should have all the men at the station flocking after us, and they would scare the white elephant into Burmah or Cambodia. Nughwa has too much sense to share any secret with his wife.”

“They have told me all about it,” said Mrs. Mayson with a smile.

“That is very different,” was the gallant response; “you are wise.”

“And you are complimentary; the news will be all the more pleasant to Atrera when she sees you bringing the white elephant home.”

During this exchange of views, Dudley Mayson recalled a singular piece of forgetfulness on the part of himself as well as of Nughwa. You remember that when the man left the lad under the cocoa palm tree, it was to seek a view of the white elephant and his companions, who were known to be pressing their way northward. In the flurry of the incidents that followed the matter had been wholly forgotten. Dudley now asked his friend what success he had had.

“I saw him,” was the reply, “and the sight has given me much hope. The three are working northward, but are in no haste, for why should they be? They will crop the herbage, bathe in the streams and rest when they feel like it, so their progress will not be fast.”

“It looks as if their home is toward the Laos country.”

“So it is.”

“How, then, do you account for their being so far south?”

“Elephants are strange creatures; they will stay in one neighbourhood for years and then a

sudden notion will take them to wander off; they may remain for months, but they always work back to their old home. That was the way with the white elephant and his friends."

The experience of the missionary led him to question the Siamese more closely.

"You have followed these animals for a considerable distance and have formed a theory of the course they are likely to follow for several days to come?"

Nughwa nodded.

"Tell me what that theory is."

"I have hunted more than once through that country; I know of a pool in which they are fond of bathing; I think the three will stop there for a time, and then push on; it is there I shall look for their spoor."

This meant that the native instead of pressing an aimless search through the intervening country, would make straight for the water to which he had referred. If his theory proved right, he would save much time and distance.

"If you fail, what will you do?"

Nughwa shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

"I shall be as well off as before; I will begin the hunt from that point."

"You speak of the place as being liked by

elephants for bathing; then a good many must resort thither?"

"Yes; I have seen them."

"You are likely to come upon the spoor of a score of elephants: how will you know whether the white one was among them?"

The same difficulty had occurred to Mrs. Mayson and to Dudley. The latter compressed his lips and shook his head. He accepted the question as a poser.

"There can be no difference in the tracks, and I shall not try to tell which one is that of the white elephant; I shall look for those of *three* friends and companions."

"And if you find them, the chances are they will be the spoor of those you are seeking," said the missionary, pleased with the shrewdness of Nughwa.

"It will look that way to me."

"You do not forget that we saw three bathing this evening," said Dudley.

"No, but that number is not common; nearly every herd has more members—sometimes twenty and even greater. It may be that three others are in a group, but the chances are against it. If I can find the spoor made by three, I shall be hopeful."

Nughwa had thus explained the general line

he meant to follow. The mother, as might have been expected, now turned attention to the preparations for the important enterprise. It may be said that the Siamese was always ready for an undertaking of that nature, for it was his profession. With his conversion, he laid aside many of his old customs. He wore a turban, instead of going with his head shaved. We recall that the upper part of his body was covered with a thin jacket and he used sandals. It has been shown also that he had abandoned the Buddhist's respect for animal life. Those of that faith will not kill vermin or serpents, and the tameness of many creatures in Buddhist countries is a cause of amazement to aliens, but Nughwa was as bitter in his hatred of many pests as a Christian.

It was settled that Dudley Mayson should discard his Panama hāt and use one of the helmets of his father, the size of their heads being about the same. Although the warmth of the country would make a thin coat uncomfortable at times, it was thought best that the youth should wear one that was spanned at the waist by a girdle and ended at the hips. The trousers reached to his knees, below which his limbs would be protected by leathern leggings and his feet covered with good shoes. This costume

was similar to that to which he had become accustomed when living with his uncle in the United States.

Nughwa for the first time carefully inspected the rifle of the lad. It was somewhat smaller than the usual weapon used by men, but it had great penetrating power, and, because of its lighter weight, was declared to be preferable to the heavier gun which his father employed when hunting in the jungle.

“He is used to it,” said Nughwa,” and will do better than with one which is strange to him; he has plenty of bullets, powder and caps, the same as myself.”

“It is fortunate, Dudley,” said his mother, “that you are as tall and heavy as your father, for his clothes will serve you until you can have some made for yourself. You will need other articles, such as a comb, brush, and several little things, which I have found in the luggage that arrived to-day.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

“I HAVE FOUND IT”

DUDLEY MAYSON, despite the exciting council of the night before, would have slumbered much longer the following morning, had he not been aroused by a sudden, spiteful whirring, like that of a cheap alarm clock. He started up and stared around, fearing that some kind of a poisonous thing had entered the apartment in which he had passed the hours of slumber.

The racket lasted for several seconds, then ceased and the syllables “*To kay*” were distinctly pronounced four or five times. This disclosed the identity of the creature, which was the famous lizard of Siam, known as the *takuet*, and accepted as the type of craft and cunning in the proverbs of the country. It is almost as large as a man’s hand, and, when it enters a dwelling is never molested. It is an inveterate enemy of all vermin and more prized even than the tailless cats.

Dudley had learned something of the reptile the night before from Fannie, so when he saw the curious looking object on the floor a few feet away, seemingly gazing in wonderment at him, he lay still and returned the stare.

"I wonder whether I shall ever get used to all the strange creatures in this part of the world; I don't believe I shall; it's a pity that so many of the people are Buddhists, for they encourage the serpents to live."

Now that our young friend is at home in Siam, a few words may be added concerning the country. You will bear in mind that this visit of Dudley Mayson was made nearly if not quite a generation ago. Siam was the only nation that flourished under the rule of two kings, there being a first and a second one, with duties so well defined that there was no friction of authority. If you care to know the names of those two rulers, here they are: First King, Phrabat Somdetja Phra Paraminthara; Second King, Kroman Bawarawich ai Chau. I wish I could pronounce them for you, but it is useless to try.

I have made references to the country of the Laos. The Shan states are tributary, the northern to Burmah and the southern to Siam. A large portion of the mountainous region of these

states forms the Laos country. The people beyond the northern frontier of Siam tattoo themselves with figures in ink, printed on their bodies, with needle-like points; the southern race living on and within the eastern frontier of Siam, do not tattoo. The capital is Xieng Mai, standing on a wide plain on the right bank of the Meinam, five hundred miles north of Bangkok. Siam contains about a million Laocians, who are gentle, unwarlike and superstitious.

When Dudley Mayson had descended the short stairs and greeted his parents and sister, he strolled through the settlement, while awaiting the morning meal. He had gained a general idea of the place the night before. The thrifty appearance of everything, the single narrow street, the bamboo dwellings, the chapel and the patches of cultivated earth, impressed him, and he felt a thrill of reverential pride to know that all this change had been brought about by his father and mother.

Naturally, he attracted attention in a community where every person knew everybody else. It was creditable to the training of these natives that their curiosity never became offensive. When he looked into the faces of the men and women, they invariably nodded and greeted him in their own language. Some of the half-

dressed children stared and grinned without salutation. He noticed the universal practice of staining the teeth a dark color with the juice of the betel nut. Every man and woman, and some of the larger children showed the disfigurement. It was repellant to Dudley, as it is to any visitor, but in the eyes of the missionary the matter was so trifling that he made no objection. He believed in the policy of St. Paul who was willing to conform in non-essentials to the practices of certain Jews, in order to win their good will.

Another fact struck the youth as singular: that was the seeming indifference of his relatives to danger that might be threatening him. He had related his adventure with the crocodile, which he mistook for a log, with the tornado, the serpent, and the crazy devotee. While they showed agitation over the latter, they saw, so far as he was able to judge, nothing noteworthy in the other incidents. They knew of the probability of tigers being met while he and Nughwa were hunting the white elephant, but they accepted that as a matter of course.

"I suppose it is because they are used to all these things, but in my country, no mother allows her boy to run into the slightest danger if she can help it, and if he does so, she is worried

almost to death until he comes back right side up."

It would be interesting to dwell more at length upon life at the missionary station of Wahta-Shat, but that phase of the narration is outside of our scope. We can follow only the experiences of Dudley Mayson and his guide during the most memorable hunt in which they ever engaged.

The plan of campaign having been fixed, Nughwa did not delay in carrying it out. Guarded investigation on his part removed his fear that the real business of the two had leaked out, or was suspected. Nughwa engaged in too many elephant-hunts for any one to feel surprise when they saw him start upon another.

The morning meal was hardly completed at the home of the missionary, when Wahrida came swinging to the front of the dwelling, with Nughwa sitting astride of her neck. Her master guided her beside the high porch, to make it easy for Dudley to seat himself on her back without using a short ladder or requiring her to kneel.

The saddle of the huge creature is known as a "howdah," and is that which you have seen on the backs of the menagerie elephants, and into which you were so eager to climb and were

scared out of your wits when you had done so. It was a circular seat, open in front, without any covering and capable of holding six or eight persons. This was for the accommodation of the young American. Nughwa preferred to sit on the rubber-like neck of the beast, though now and then, he shifted to the howdah, where he had placed his gun, ropes and other articles he expected to need before his return.

When Dudley Mayson had made the slight leap necessary from the porch and landed in the howdah, he glanced around at his relatives.

"I feel as if I were sitting on the top of a meeting-house; if I ever fall, it will break my neck."

"But you are not going to fall," laughed Fannie; "you are not so awkward as that."

"The elephant is of the usual size," quietly remarked the missionary; "I have dropped from their backs with very little jarring."

"Did you ever jump to the back of one?"

"No; but I have seen it done."

"By whom? Nughwa?"

"No; by you, a few minutes ago."

"I meant from the ground; well, good bye, all!"

He gaily waved his hand and the three returned the salutation. As Wahrida ambled

ponderously along the single street, the men, women and most of the children paused from their occupations and stared and grinned. To several, Nughwa flirted his hand and smiled—notably to a comely woman, living in the last house, who had come forth and said something to him to which he replied. Dudley rightly conjectured that this woman was the wife of his friend, though he saw neither of the two children.

Wahrida was soon free from the settlement, and, at the command of her master, turned toward the northwest. As she plunged over a well-marked path, Nughwa began talking to her in Siamese, and kept it up for nearly a mile. When he was through, he turned his grinning face toward his companion:

“Did you hear what I said?”

“Yes, but didn’t understand a word.”

“I reminded Wahrida of her noble line of ancestors—she has heard it all before, so it is an old story—and I told her of our seeing the white elephant and how anxious we are to make him a prisoner; then I explained how we are going about it.”

“How useful that would be if she could understand what you say!”

“Understand what I say!” exclaimed

Nughwa, turning his head farther, and assuming an earnest expression; “she understands every syllable.”

Dudley did not think it tactful to dispute this, though he was far from believing the astounding declaration. Nughwa clambered from the neck of the elephant into the howdah, with the remark:

“How fortunate for you that Wahrida does not know your language!”

“Why?”

“If she did, she would run under some of the limbs and scrape you off, to show she does not like to be talked about that way.”

“Please keep mum, Nughwa, then, and don’t tell her my words; I will be careful hereafter of what I say.”

“I see you do not believe what I have said; to that, I answer—*wait!*”

Had Wahrida chosen, she could have freed herself of her load in a twinkling. All she needed to do was to dash under some of the protruding limbs, and the howdah, man and boy, would have been brought tumbling to the ground. The vehicle was secured with great care by straps passed underneath her body and tied fast. It took Dudley some time to become accustomed to the peculiar swaying motion,

which resembled that of a ship at sea, but it was the intelligent care of the animal herself that was the real protection of our friends.

The course led through many open stretches of country, where there were no trees, but abundance of rank, luxuriant grass, which was trampled by the huge feet as easily as if the animal were making her way over an artificial carpet. Nughwa explained that they were "cutting 'cross lots," and, without looking for the spoor, he was heading for the stream with its pool, which, for some reason or other, was a favourite bathing place with many elephants.

Observing the frequent searching glances of his companion from side to side and often in front, Dudley asked him the cause of his alertness.

"It is my custom, when on a hunt," he replied.

"But you are unusually watchful."

"We are apt to meet tigers and I don't care to stop and have a fight."

"You have had many fights with them."

"More than I can remember. You have noticed that scar which reaches from my temple to my chin; there are others on my body; all were made by tiger claws, and the worst fight I

ever had with one of the animals was in sight of this spot."

Dudley thought it well to have an eye to things, and reached down and brought his rifle from the bottom of the howdah. Nughwa smiled:

"They do not attack so suddenly that you won't have time to catch up your gun; they are quick, and might bound from the jungle, but Wahrida does not like them, and she will be sure to give us warning in time."

The elephant was jogging forward at what seemed to be a deliberate pace, but which put the land rapidly behind her. The plain was open right and left, and there was still a quarter of a mile in front, when the jungle once more confronted them.

"Through that runs the stream which we are to cross, and where I expect to find the spoor of the white elephant."

"Shall we come up with him to-day?"

Nughwa shook his head.

"That is too good fortune to expect, but it may be."

He spoke to his pet and she instantly increased her pace. The fact that she showed no sign of alarm was proof that no hostile animals were near. As she reached the edge of the

jungle, Nughwa told her to moderate her speed. A minute later Dudley saw the shimmer of water through the trees. He noticed too that the sagacious creature was following a trail, doubtless made by those of her kind in going to the water.

The protruding limbs compelled her to move slowly and pick her way, and despite her care, some of the branches rattled heavily against the howdah, and the occupants had to duck their heads to dodge painful blows. Dudley escaped by crouching, so that the sides of the saddle were higher than his body. A short distance and Wahrida halted on the edge of the water.

The youth saw that the stream broadened like the one crossed the day before. Naturally only a few rods in width, it here expanded into a lagoon, fully two hundred yards across. It was not yet noon and not a solitary animal was descried standing in the water or sporting with the element, as they were sure to do later in the day. Near sunset was the favourite time, though, as has been shown, numbers of elephants preferred to have their ablutions at night.

When Wahrida halted, her master stepped from the howdah and knelt on her neck. He leaned over and peered at the ground in front

and on each side. It was so wet and spongy that no animal could pass into the water without leaving deeply imbedded footprints. The ground was so contorted with them, that Dudley could not believe that such experienced eyes even as his companion's could differentiate the tracks. Instead of a spoor made by three elephants, it looked as if scores had trampled over the spot and each had left his mark.

Suddenly Nughwa, leaving his gun behind, seized the upper part of one of Wahrida's big ears, and, using it to steady himself, swung to the ground with the nimbleness of a monkey. The youth smiled at the indifference of the brute, who stood motionless and seemingly unaware of the liberty that had just been taken with her.

But Nughwa was not thinking of her. He first turned to the right, and walked along the bank for fifty paces or more. He moved slowly, and with his keen black eyes on the ground, sometimes pausing and stooping to gain closer scrutiny. How he could hope for success in separating the tracks of three from their numberless companions was more than Dudley Mayson could comprehend, and yet the Siamese would not have made the effort unless he had reason to look for success.

Pausing at the extreme end of the route, Nughwa stood with arms akimbo, studying the soggy earth in front of him. He did not stoop, as he had done several times before, but gazed a long time at one spot, in which he seemed to discover something. Then he slowly raised his eyes and peered across the lagoon to the other shore. Nothing rewarded this visual search, and he turned and began approaching the spot where Wahrida and her rider were awaiting him. As he drew near, he looked up at Dudley and shook his head.

“The spoor is not on that side; if I do not find it below, then I have made a mistake and we must search for it—I don’t know where.”

He wasted no time, but did his work thoroughly, advancing still slower than before, and scrutinizing every foot of ground that came into his narrow field of vision.

“He was confident last night,” thought Dudley, “but he ought to have remembered that the easiest thing in the world is for a person to make a mistake. If he does not find what he is seeking, it will be as he said: he won’t know where to look. I am afraid after all that as Pop fears—the white elephant is beyond our reach.”

Nughwa had abruptly halted a dozen paces

away. Dudley saw him stoop, as if about to pick up something. Then he walked toward the water, turned, and moved rapidly from it. A few yards were enough, when he straightened up, and with glowing face called to his young friend:

"I have found it!"

CHAPTER XXIX

A SNUB

WAHRIDDA showed that she understood the joyous words of her master, by immediately walking to where he stood. Reaching out her trunk, she wrapped it about his waist, he steadying himself with his hand against the prehensile organ, and gently lifted him with a twisting motion to her head, where, setting him free, he bestrode the pulpy neck.

“You seem to be sure of it, Nughwa,” said Dudley, no less pleased than his friend.

“I am sure; look there!”

He pointed to the soft, wet earth on the edge of the lagoon, which was a network of tracks made by the large animals.

“I should say twenty-odd elephants have crossed there within the last few hours.”

“They have, and among them were the three we are seeking. Their spoor is as plain as the sun shining in the sky.”

“It may be to you, but I can make nothing of it.”

At the command of Nughwa, the elephant now stepped into the lagoon. She moved slowly, feeling her way after the manner of her kind.

“Will she have to swim?” asked Dudley.

“No; the water comes well up to her sides, and at one place will touch the howdah, but she can walk all the way.”

Wahrida advanced regularly and it proved to be as her master had said. She would have been glad to halt long enough to spray herself with the refreshing element, but made no attempt to do so, because she knew her master was not willing to delay. She was a cheerful slave to his wishes.

Three-fourths of the distance was passed and the water had shallowed so markedly that the dripping body rose clear, when the beast abruptly halted, raised her trunk, and slightly trumpeted. Her riders saw the cause. Two elephants of great size had come out of the jungle to the edge of the lagoon, when they halted at sight of the party in the water.

Nughwa stepped into the howdah and picked up his rifle.

“I may have to shoot,” he explained quietly.

“Shall I help you?”

“No; don’t attempt to fire; if a second shot is needed, I will use your gun.”

It looked as if a collision was certain, for the two big fellows trumpeted, and one of them moved down the slight slope, and headed directly for Wahrida. His companion did the same close behind him. Nughwa stood erect, and began swinging his arms and shouting to the strangers. His words and manner made the couple uneasy. They advanced slowly, watching the single animal and its riders, or rather the one who was creating such a racket. He did not relax his vigour, and finally produced the effect he was aiming at. The couple turned to one side and made a detour, which placed several rods between them and the other as they met and passed.

Dudley Mayson was uneasy, for he was sure that a collision must be a serious one. Nughwa could readily bring down the first animal, for he knew the exact spot to use as a target, but the bullet carried by the boy’s rifle was so much smaller than those used in hunting large game, that he feared it would do no more than wound the beast, which in his rage, would charge upon his assailant. That would bring Wahrida into the fray and she would give a good account of herself, but, to put it mildly, the two

riders must suffer some "disturbance." Happily, however, all this was averted, through the shouts and antics of the Siamese.

Dudley kept watch of the two fellows. The sight after the meeting was curious. When the couple were a number of paces behind Wahrida, they paused, and standing with their bodies pointed toward the shore, solemnly turned their huge heads and gazed steadily at the single creature with the howdah on her back. Queer thoughts must have wriggled through those massive brains. Perhaps they were in doubt whether they had not acted a discreditable part and were disposed to make the attack after all. If so, they thought better and resumed their plodding passage, not halting to indulge in any frolics in the water.

"It is well for them they showed good sense," said Nughwa, resuming his seat beside his young friend; "if they had come a step nearer, I should have fired."

"Would my rifle have answered for the second?"

"I should have tried to reload mine before he reached us; if I had not enough time, then your gun would have been used; it might not have killed him, but," added the native sig-

nificantly, "Wahridda would have given whatever help we needed."

With the passing of the danger, Nughwa once more centred his attention upon the important work in hand. He had laid down his gun within the howdah, and perched on the neck of his beast, was leaning far over and studying the innumerable footprints. Dudley used his eyes as best he could, but they were of no assistance in the peculiar task.

Evidently Nughwa was disappointed. The footprints for which he was searching did not appear. It looked as if the three elephants had left the stream at some other point, or had turned about and gone back to the shore behind them. The latter was not likely, since the trio were certainly making for the Laos country.

As Wahridda stepped upon the hard earth, her master swung himself down as before with the aid of one of her flapping ears and renewed his search for the spoor. This time he turned to the right, being contrary to the course which had ended with his first discovery. Almost immediate success followed.

"I have it! Come, Wahridda!"

She lumbered toward him, he running forward to meet her, and he was circled back to his seat by her trunk. But our friends were not

yet through with annoyances, for hardly had Wahrida ascended the gentle declivity which led into the jungle, when a shout fell upon their ears, and she halted. The crashing of undergrowth showed where one of her kind was approaching over a course that would bring him within a rod or less of our friends. Dudley saw the swaying branches which soon parted like a veil and revealed two men seated on the back of a large elephant, without any saddle. At sight of Nughwa they checked their gigantic steed and addressed him by name, for they were old acquaintances,—elephant-catchers like himself, though not Christians. The conversation, as afterwards interpreted by Nughwa, was substantially as follows:

“Whither are you going, Nughwa?”

“On a hunt, as you should know without asking; I have a friend with me, who has never hunted elephants and I wish to show him how it is done.”

“He is a stranger to us; where does he come from?”

“He is the son of the good missionary at Wahta-Shat; he has come a long way over the great water and reached his home last night.”

“We have been on a two days’ hunt.”

“With what success?”

“None, and yet not wholly none; we shot one elephant who had big tusks that we shall claim; they will bring a goodly sum in Bangkok; do you seek ivory?”

Nughwa was tempted to falsify, but his conscience would not permit him.

“No, my friend wishes to make prisoner of an elephant.”

“Why should he do that when you have one with you?”

“She is *mine*; no one can buy her from me.”

“He can buy plenty so that no risk will come to himself.”

“What sport is it when the hunter runs no risk? It would rob it of all its enjoyment.”

“True; we will go with you to help take care of your friend.”

This remark gave Nughwa a thrill of suspicion. It was unusual for a couple of natives to volunteer in this manner to join a party of hunters, when not invited to do so.

“They know of the white elephant,” was the thought of the guide; “they believe we are looking for him; they mean to share the prize with us; but they shall not.”

He would have been annoyed had the circumstances been different. He therefore spoke curtly:

“You have not been asked to join us; we do not want you; I would not care for myself, but you have not the looks that please strangers.”

This certainly was a “snub,” and the two to whom the words were addressed were not pleased. One of them had done the talking thus far, but it was the other who now spoke:

“How do you know your friend would not like to have us go with you? Surely he will be safer than with you alone, for we are better elephant hunters than you.”

“I should not like to say that to him, for fear the words would be put to a test; then he would learn that they were false.”

“You must have some *particular reason* for not wishing any companions except this boy of the white face.”

The words rankled. Nughwa thought he saw a sinister meaning in the peculiar intonation of the speaker.

“They know of the white elephant,” was his thought; “they have lost his spoor; they learned long ago that my skill is much greater than theirs; they mean to go with me, but they shall not; I kept away the two elephants and I will keep them away.”

To strengthen his position, Nughwa now spoke to Dudley Mayson:

“They want to go with us on this hunt; I do not want them; do *you?*”

“Of course not; they are strangers to me, though not to you; I do not like their looks; get rid of them as soon as you can.”

This was sufficient for Nughwa's purpose, and he turned to his countrymen:

“My friend does not like your looks; he does not wish you for companions; that is enough, and we shall not let you go with us.”

To show that the matter was ended, the guide spoke to his animal and she plunged into the jungle. The Siamese did not look behind him, but hearing nothing of the noisy progress of the other, he knew they were standing still, probably debating as to what they should do.

The black eyes of the guide flashed. He had a temper of his own and it had been roused by what had just taken place. Wahrida had gone but a little way when a gentle word from her master caused her to halt. He slipped to the ground, and Dudley noticed that this time he took his rifle with him. The jungle was so dense that, walking fast, he quickly passed from sight.

The Siamese moved as silently as a shadow through the wood, turning off from the trail his own animal had been following, and enter-

ing that over which his two acquaintances had passed. They knew nothing of his veiled approach, and, when he caught sight of them, he made sure he was invisible to both.

The other elephant was standing motionless and the men on his back were conversing in tones so low that the eavesdropper could not distinguish the words. Protected by the trunk of a tree, he softly raised the hammer of his rifle, muffling the dull click lest it should reach their ears. Nughwa was never in a more deadly earnest mood. He was determined that these two should neither be his companions on the eventful hunt, nor should they be allowed to follow even at a distance. He would give them warning, and if necessary shoot both, for, though he had but the single charge at instant command, he had no fear of the couple.

As the elephant stood, his head was turned away, and the natives consequently had their backs toward Nughwa. This helped to muffle their voices, and, though our friend strained his acute hearing to the utmost, it availed him nothing. He did not doubt that the two were debating the question of following the man and boy, and the fact indicated further, that one was in favour of doing so, while the other was opposed.

It is safe to say that the natives never knew how close they trod to death in those few minutes. Nughwa had proved by more than one severe test that he was a Christian, and his conscience did not rebuke him for the resolution he had formed. These men may have seen the white elephant and failed in their attempt to capture him. They should not be allowed to use *him*, in trying to repair their blunder: on that point he was inflexible.

He who opposed the trick was successful in whatever argument he advanced. It may have been that he had a clearer knowledge of the character of Nughwa and feared his anger. Be that as it may, the plan was abandoned. Their elephant trampled off, with his head still pointed toward the lagoon. Soon after, the splash of water was heard. Nughwa stole forward and saw the animal wading from shore. The guide kept his place, until he saw him ascend the opposite slope and disappear in the jungle on that side. Then Nughwa turned and hastened back to his anxious young friend.

CHAPTER XXX

"THE END IS THE BEGINNING"

"WE ARE through with them," announced Nughwa, as his elephant assisted him to his seat again; "they will trouble us no more."

Knowing the concern of Dudley Mayson, he briefly told what he had witnessed.

"It looks as if they knew something about the white elephant," said the youth.

"I cannot be sure as to that, but I *am* sure that, though we may be bothered by others, *they* will not get in our way."

"The temptation must be strong, but may it not be they have come to the belief that where they failed, no hope remains to us, or rather to you, for I don't count?"

"That is perhaps true; let us give them no more thought."

"Urged by her master, Wahrida increased her speed, wherever the opportunity offered. At times, she had to pick her way carefully, for

she never forgot the two who sat in the howdah, and, as it was, they had to dodge the limbs which now and then brushed against them. Then an open space would be reached, where the progress was unimpeded, and, though her gait was awkward, she made excellent progress. The convergence of different kinds of animals to this favorite bathing place created a number of trails which were of great help to the beast; but, as she advanced, these paths not only decreased in number but showed with less distinctness. This added to the difficulty of travelling.

Two or three miles had been traversed, when Nughwa suddenly said:

“I am displeased.”

“With what?” was the surprised question.

“Don’t you see a storm is coming?”

As he spoke, he looked up at the sky, whose fast gathering clouds had eclipsed the sunlight, which was growing dimmer with every minute. At the same time the lad’s cheek was struck by a large drop of water.

“Hurry!” called Nughwa, slipping to the ground in his usual fashion. Dudley imitated him, but, through fear of hurting the elephant, he grasped the ear too gingerly, and sprawled to the ground. The distance was not sufficient

to harm him, and he was on his feet in an instant.

At this time they were in the middle of an open stretch of country, with the protecting jungle two hundred yards away at the nearest point. Dudley supposed they were to make a run for it, but had they started, they would have been drenched, for nothing can surpass the suddenness with which tropical storms break in all their fury. Such, however, was not the purpose of the guide, who at the moment of leaping down, called to Wahrida to kneel and she promptly obeyed.

By the time the two alighted, myriads of big drops were shooting downward like leaden bullets. The instant Wahrida completed her kneeling, Nughwa darted behind one of her ears and shouted to Dudley to do the same on the other side. The lad understood what was necessary, and dashed around in front of the huge head, with the tusks almost resting on the ground, the trunk curled up between them, and the patient eyes looking out as calmly as those of the Sphinx.

Darting in behind the ear, Dudley shrivelled together and found he was as well protected as if in his own home. Wahrida, with her usual sagacity, threw back her aural appendages, as

far as was convenient, the hollow in front of the shoulder offering the necessary niche, into which the youth shrank and smiled at the storm. Nughwa did the same, except that he allowed his feet to project from the lower lobe of the ear, where they were plentifully sprinkled.

The rain was accompanied by a strong gust of wind, which blew directly against the head of the elephant. This was fortunate for our friends, for had the torrent descended vertically, it is quite likely the roof would have leaked.

Dudley Mayson could not help smiling over the natural umbrella which served him so well, for the shelter could not have been improved, though it was not the one he would have chosen before a tree with abundant foliage. There was a musky odour in the stuffy quarters which, with the natural heat of the animal's body, would have made a prolonged stay unpleasant.

"I wonder if the owner of the house will object if I cut a window through," said the lad to himself, as he gently pushed the enormous flap a few inches from his face; "a fellow is entitled to light and ventilation. She must know how I feel," he added, as Wahrida flirted the big fan from before him, and left him standing in the open air.

The cause was apparent. The rain had stopped as abruptly as it began, and the need for shelter had passed.

"Up again!" called Nughwa; "we are losing time."

Wahrida having sunk to the ground, now waited till the two had clambered to her back, before she lurched to her feet again. They found the howdah saturated, but it would soon dry in the heated air, and our friends did not mind a little thing like that. Well aware of the call for haste, Wahrida sped rapidly across the open space, and plunged again into the jungle at a pace which threatened the safety of the riders.

"Has not this storm wiped out the spoor of the three elephants?" asked Dudley.

"No," replied Nughwa, who continually glanced at the ground; "it is not quite so plain as before, but it doesn't bother Wahrida."

"Is *she* helping you track the others?" asked the astonished youth.

"I could do nothing without her, but it did not seem worth while to tell you, since you have so slight an opinion of her wisdom."

"I have had the highest opinion all along of her sagacity, Nughwa, but some of the things you told me stagger belief; I am doing as you

said,—waiting and ready to own up when the proof comes.”

The sun had reappeared, and not a trace of the violent shower was noticeable, except the steaming moisture from the foliage and the ground. Some portions of the jungle were so depressed that the mosquitoes rose in swarms about the heads of the man and boy. They were so large and vicious that Dudley Mayson suffered a good deal, though they did not seem to bring discomfort to the Siamese. One cannot understand how any person can become accustomed to the insects, whose attacks are sometimes maddening, but they certainly show partiality in their attention, and some people can stand them better than others. The relief came when Wahrida traversed higher ground, which grew more frequent as they progressed.

Dudley's mother had provided him with a lunch of cooked fish, which the two ate while swaying in the howdha, topping off, as is the custom in that part of the world, with some of the delicious fruit which is always at command. Nughwa said he explained to Wahrida early that morning the necessity of losing as little time as possible in the important enterprise, and she had eaten enough to last her a week at least. However, it was not to be ex-

pected that she would be very abstemious in the midst of plenty.

"We are drawing near a more mountainous country than any you have seen," said Nughwa, "and we shall find more wild animals there."

"They don't seem to be very scarce in the regions we have passed through, but why are we to meet more to the north?"

"That district is better fitted for them and they are not as likely to be disturbed by hunters, though many hundreds could be killed without anyone noticing it."

"What sort of wild beasts shall we meet?"

"Many kinds—elephants, tigers, buffaloes, bears, rhinoceroses, deer, ourang-outangs, and others of less account."

"You have mentioned enough to satisfy any one; we must be gaining on our game."

"I believe we are; they are not making any haste to reach the mountainous region, and I think they spent some time bathing in the lagoon we left behind us; if they did, we cannot be far behind them."

Dudley noticed a marked change in the face of the country. The height increased to such an extent that he felt the difference in the temperature, not forgetting, however, that such difference might be temporary and due to other

causes. It looked like old hunting times in America, when at one of these halts, Nughwa pointed to a thin column of smoke rising against the clear sky. It was the first time the youth had seen anything of the kind in Siam.

“Why have the natives kindled that?” he asked.

“They are not natives; it is the work of white men.”

“Then we are likely to have trouble with them?”

“I do not think so; their camp fire is in the wrong direction; besides, white men don't know how to catch white elephants.”

“They may shoot this one.”

“Not unless they are fools; their lives would pay for their folly; they must know something of the love which all Siamese feel for the sacred creatures; I have no fear of *that*.”

When the elevation and character of the country were favourable, Nughwa borrowed Dudley's telescope and scrutinized his field of vision. The youth noticed that he looked to the rear as well as the front. When questioned, however, he said it was not through any mis-giving that the two whom they met at the lagoon were stealing after them, but there might

be others more determined than they to be “in at the death.”

Thus while the course of the white elephant in passing comparatively close to the missionary station, was favourable in one respect, since it made his pursuit easier, it had the great disadvantage of probably attracting the attention of others beside our friends. No elephant-catcher would throw away the chance of a lifetime, and it was quite certain that the venture of this particular animal into the southern portion of Siam would prove the doom of his freedom. From a wild, roving inhabitant of the jungle, he would become a pampered glutton, and the idol of multitudes, for no other reason than that disease had affected the pigment under some portions of his thick hide.

Wahrida pressed forward with an energy that seemed tireless. Her master knew what she could do without fatigue, and none could have handled her with more consideration. He compelled her to slacken her gait, when, but for such command, she would have continued her high pace, and several times in the course of the afternoon he made her rest. None the less, she covered more miles that day than ever before in her life.

When the long, sultry afternoon drew to a

close, Wahrida was halted near a clump of trees, where the grass was less abundant, the air cooler and hardly a mosquito intruded. The stream which wound to the left, was only a few yards wide and not more than two feet in depth.

Nughwa borrowed the glass of Dudley Mayson, and climbed to an adjoining elevation from which an extended view was gained, for it was high and wholly free from anything except a scattered growth of grass. While Wahrida began plucking the tender herbage near at hand, Dudley watched his friend. He saw him point his glass to the northward, and stand for two or three minutes without the slightest movement. Then, lowering the instrument, he turned and beckoned to his young friend to join him.

Dudley hurried to his side. Nughwa handed him the glass, and, pointing with his hand almost due north, said:

“You see that small valley, with bushes growing between the ridges. Some animals are cropping the leaves, for they are of a kind which they love; look at them.”

The point indicated was about a third of a mile away. Dudley Mayson levelled the instrument, and as he did so plainly saw three big

quadrupeds feeding. And the one in the middle was the white elephant!

The moment the youth identified the animal, a singular reminiscence flashed upon him. When he was graduated from the High School, in his distant home, it fell to his lot to select the class motto: This was his choice:

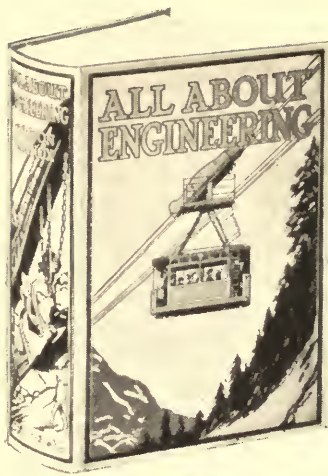
Finus est Initium

“The end is the beginning,” he repeated; “the end of all our work thus far is the beginning of our real work in capturing the white elephant.”

He was right, and the particulars of his memorable adventures and experiences will be told in “The Hunt of the White Elephant: a Sequel to ‘River and Jungle.’”



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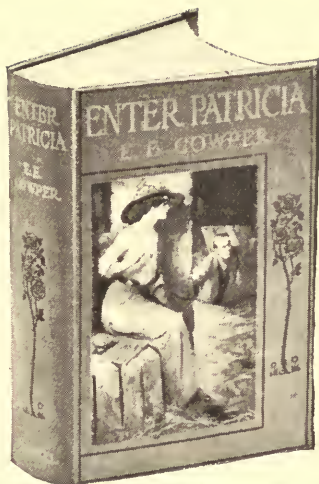
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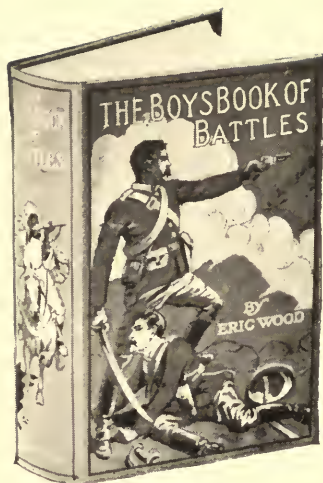
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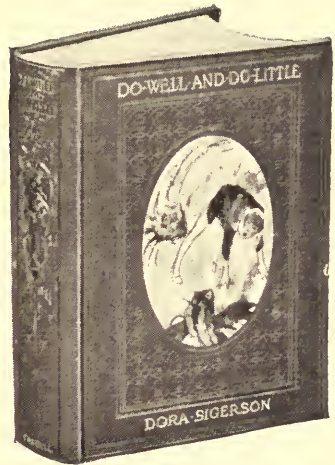
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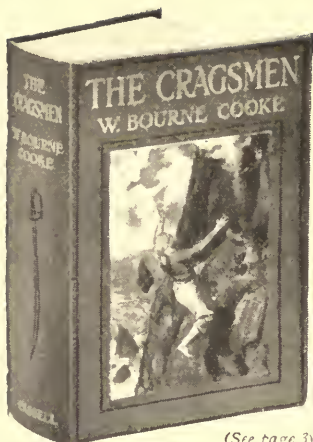
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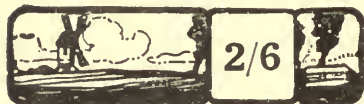
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